

JANUARY-MARCH

1952

SIGHT AND SOUND



*The
Film
Quarterly*

RENÉ CLAIR and ROGER MANVELL: Debate With A Past Self
SIMON HARCOURT-SMITH: Minnelli and the American Musical

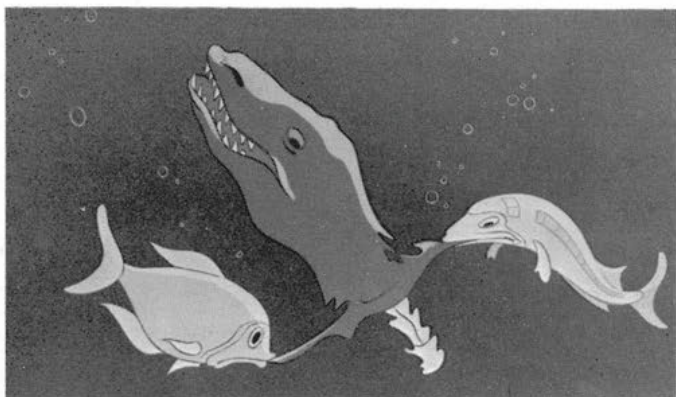
Articles and Reviews by

JAMES BROUGHTON CAVALCANTI GAVIN LAMBERT
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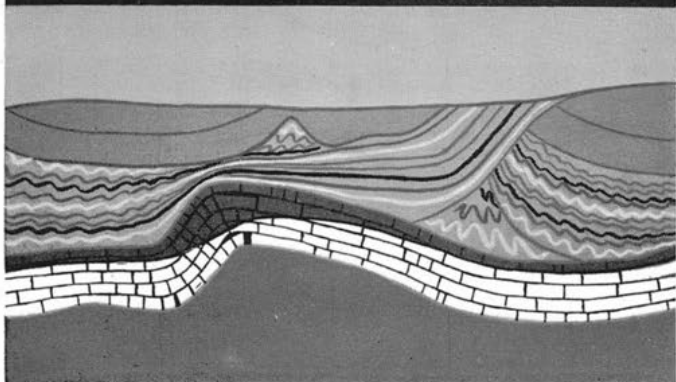
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This list has been compiled for us by the staff of SIGHT AND SOUND and we hope it may serve as a useful general guide to the principal films that have been in British cinemas during the past three months

*AFRICAN QUEEN, THE (*British Lion*). John Huston's highly entertaining version of the C. S. Forester story about a female missionary and a beachcomber in Africa (Katharine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart.)

ALONG THE GREAT DIVIDE (*Warners*). U.S. Marshal Kirk Douglas saves a man from a lynch mob and proves his innocence in undistinguished Western. (Virginia Mayo: director, Raoul Walsh.)

*AMERICAN IN PARIS, AN (*M.G.M.*). Gay, inventive musical with a patchy script but brilliantly staged numbers. (Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron: director, Vincente Minnelli.)

ANOTHER MAN'S POISON (*Eros*). Lady novelist kills husbands in Yorkshire; rackets barnstormer for fervent Bette Davis fans only. (Gary Merrill, Anthony Steel: director, Irving Rapper.)

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA (*Fox*). Darryl Zanuck's Bible story; more restrained and less vulgar than de Mille, but even duller. (Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward: director, Henry King.)

DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, THE (*Fox*). Scientifiction with a peace message; rather tame thrills. (Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal: director, Robert Wise.)

DOUBLE DYNAMITE (*R.K.O.*). Croucho Marx quite entertaining in otherwise disappointing comedy. (Jane Russell, Frank Sinatra: director, Irving Cummings.)

HOUSE IN THE SQUARE, THE (*Fox*). Remake of *Berkeley Square*: pedestrian, novelettish account of atomic scientist who goes back to the 18th century, falls in love with girl etc. (Tyrone Power, Ann Blyth: director, Roy Baker.)

I WANT YOU (*R.K.O.*). A typical Goldwyn family faces up to the war in Korea: slick, sentimental and alarming. (Dana Andrews, Dorothy McGuire, Farley Granger: director, Mark Robson.)

LADY GODIVA RIDES AGAIN (*British Lion*). The rise and disillusionment of a beauty queen. Satire at the expense of show business lacks punch, but plenty of entertaining moments. (Pauline Stroud, Diana Dors, Dennis Price: director, Frank Launder.)

LIGHT TOUCH, THE (*M.G.M.*). Comedy thriller of picture thieves and innocent young artist, set in Italy and North Africa. Only average. (Pier Angeli, Stewart Granger: director, Richard Brooks.)

LULLABY OF BROADWAY (*Warners*). Doris Day agreeable in conventionally plotted and handled back stage musical. (Gene Nelson: director, David Butler.)

M (*Columbia*). Indifferent remake of the famous Lang thriller, about a pathological child murderer. (David Wayne: director, Joseph Losey.)

MR. DENNING DRIVES NORTH (*British Lion*). Confused melodrama, with attempts at comedy, concerning an aircraft manufacturer involved in crime. (John Mills, Phyllis Calvert: director, Anthony Kimmins.)

MURDER INC. (*Warners*). D.A.'s investigation of crime ring organised to murder for profit; adequate, tough thriller. (Humphrey Bogart, Zero Mostel: director, Bretaigne Windust.)

MY FAVOURITE SPY (*Paramount*). Bob Hope comedy spy story: not vintage but better than for some time. (Hedy Lamarr: director, Norman Taurog.)

NEVER TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER (*Independent/British Lion*). Pretty little fable about a boy, a donkey and the Pope. Set in Italy. (Vittorio Manunta: directors, Maurice Cloche, Ralph Smart.)

ONLY THE VALIANT (*Warners*). Cavalry and Indians Western, with Gregory Peck as tough commander of an isolated fort. Routine. (Barbara Payton, Ward Bond: director, Gordon Douglas.)

*OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS (*British Lion*). Carol Reed's new film, adaptation of the Conrad novel: exciting but uneven. Fine performance from Trevor Howard. A British film event. (Ralph Richardson, Kerima, Robert Morley.)

SCROOGE (*Renown*). Alistair Sim entertaining but miscast in competent new version of seasonable classic. (Kathleen Harrison, Jack Warner: director, Brian Desmond Hurst.)

STRICTLY DISHONOURABLE (*M.G.M.*). Screen version of Preston Sturges' 'twenties play about a young girl in love with a middle-aged opera singer. Moderately amusing. (Ezio Pinza, Janet Leigh: directors, Melvin Frank, Norman Panama.)

TROIS TELEGRAMMES (*Film Traders*). A messenger boy fails to deliver three telegrams: story of the consequences. Fair. (Gerard Gervais, Pierette Simone: director, Henri Decoin.)

WESTWARD THE WOMEN (*M.G.M.*). Wagon trek of women to join their pioneer husbands in California: very heavy trail. (Robert Taylor, Denise Darcel: director, William Wellman.)

WHERE NO VULTURES FLY (*G.F.D.*). Founding a game reserve in East Africa weak narrative, good animal (colour) photography. (Anthony Steel, Dinah Sheridan: director, Harry Watt.)

(Films reviewed in this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND are not included in the Film Guide.)

Those marked with an asterisk are especially recommended.

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Published by the British Film Institute

VOLUME 21 (New Quarterly Series) No. 3

JANUARY - MARCH 1952

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Copyright in all articles originally published in SIGHT AND SOUND is reserved to the British Film Institute.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2. (Temple Bar 1642).

SIGHT AND SOUND is sent free every quarter to members of the Institute: annual subscription rate (4 issues) 15s. including postage; U.S.A.: \$3.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Denis Forman, Gavin Lambert, Ernest Lindgren, Stanley Reed.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Gavin Lambert.

ASSISTANT: Penelope Houston.

PRINTED BY McCorquodale & Co., Ltd., London, S.E., England.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick, Ltd., London.

ADVERTISING OFFICES: Husey & Co., 92 Fleet Street, E.C.4 (Central 8209).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

ROMULUS FILMS for *The African Queen* and picture of John Huston
GROUP 3 LIMITED for *Brandy for the Parson*, *Judgment Deferred*,
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SIGHT AND SOUND'S Alphabet for 1951

The Front Page

- A** is for ADAPTATIONS. Contrary to the rules, the filming of famous novels and plays has provided some of the most notable achievements of the year. Authors brought to the screen in 1951 included Shakespeare, Strindberg, Bernanos, Rostand, Dreiser, Stephen Crane, Hemingway, Somerset Maugham and Schnitzler. Most distinguished: Strindberg (*Miss Julie*), Bernanos (*Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*), Schnitzler (*La Ronde*). Most stimulating: Dreiser (*A Place in the Sun*). Most entertaining: Maugham (*Winter Cruise in Encore*). Most controversial, and at times brilliant: Shakespeare (Welles' *Macbeth*).
- B** is for the BIBLE, and the need to lay off it. One had hoped *Samson and Delilah* was not the beginning of a cycle, but with *David and Bathsheba* and the threat of *The Story of Esther*, one fears it is. Tarting up the Old Testament is one of the cinema's least edifying occupations.
- C** is for COMEDY, and the scarcity of it. The first appearance in this country of Carné and Prévert's 14-year-old *Drôle de Drame* was the comic event of the year: a stylish, whacky burlesque of Edwardian Scotland Yard trying rashly to unravel a murder mystery involving Louis Jouvet, Michel Simon and Françoise Rosay. Andreyev's settings and Jaubert's music were both highly advantageous elements. From Britain, *The Man in the White Suit* took the lead, Alexander Mackendrick's modern morality with an original flavour, and excellent performances by Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood and Ernest Thesiger. Almost the year's unfunniest, alas, were the remnants of Preston Sturges' *Mad Wednesday*.
- D** is for DISAPPOINTMENTS. Plenty of these, above all in the profusion of undistinguished films from distinguished people. *Detective Story* from Wyler: *Halls of Montezuma* from Milestone (see M): *Cyrano de Bergerac* from Stanley Kramer: *I Shall Return* from Lang: *Sous le Ciel de Paris* from Duvivier: *Here Comes the Groom* from Capra—and, mourned in private, *Juliette* from Carné and *Zhukovsky* from Pudovkin.
- E** is for ENTERPRISE—not in making films (that comes under I) but in showing them. A welcome addition to specialist cinemas in London is the New Gallery, now taken over by Regent Films, who aim to show high quality films at low prices. Particularly interesting is their decision to show adventurous short films.
- F** is for FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN. The South Bank and the Telecinema opened in May, closed in September: queues all day, every day, to see the stereoscopies, outstanding novelty of the exhibition. Especially intriguing was Norman MacLaren's *Now is the Time*. Of the special films, *David*, Paul Dickson's account of an Ammanford miner's life, proved to be one of the most notable achievements of the year. Basil Wright's *Waters of Time*, his first film for several years, was carefully, sensitively composed, yet lacked real impact. The programmes were augmented by the *Painter and Poet* films, then by *Forward a Century*, which began with a fascinating evocation of the 1851 Exhibition through contemporary prints and engravings, but ended on a rather strident mechanistic note; and the Festival feature film, *The Magic Box*, was premièred in September.
- G** is for GAIETY, a quality always welcome: three examples of it were gratefully received in 1951. First, Luciano Emmer's first feature film, *Domenica d'Agosto*, a light and entertaining cross-section of events on a pleasure beach near Rome: second, *An American in Paris*, the musical of the year, directed by Minnelli, danced and choreographed by Gene Kelly, with a weak script but some wonderfully staged numbers, above all the closing ballet: third, Jacques Becker's *Edouard et Caroline*, a charming romantic comedy, beautifully played by Daniel Gélin and Anne Vernon, and with some nice satire at the expense of high society.
- H** is for HONOURABLE MENTIONS. One wouldn't single out any of these films for the best of the year, but they all had genuine qualities and deserve to be remembered. *Fourteen Hours*, the story of the man on the ledge, in which the central situation was

grippingly handled, but the treatment of crowds too negative. *Donne Senza Nome*, an Italian film about a prison camp for stateless women: uneven, but with some powerful episodes. *Four in a Jeep*, Lindtberg's neutral study of English, American, French and Russian M.P.s in Vienna, had some good scenes that didn't add up to a good film. The *Red Badge of Courage* was a brave attempt by John Huston to match the peculiar intensity of Stephen Crane's novel. *The Magic Garden* was an agreeable folk-tale from South Africa.

- I is for INDEPENDENCE. For people to make their films exactly as they want to, with no interference from anybody, is a rare event. 1951 brought Sucksdorff's beautiful new film made in India, *The Wind and the River*; James Broughton's witty and touching *Loony Tom*, *Four in the Afternoon*, *Mother's Day* and *Adventures of Jimmy*; and Jacques Baratier's amusing tour of existentialist Paris, *Désordre*. In features, Paul Rotha's film about Irish tinkers, *No Resting Place*, independently produced by Colin Lesslie, was a notable venture; in Italy, the novelist Curzio Malaparte made a striking first entry with *Cristo Proibito*; in France, Nicole Vedrès explored the future with *La Vie Commence Demain*, which was interesting but left us none the wiser.
- J is for JOB'S COMFORTER. Twice this year there was no alternative but to call him in: after *High Treason* and after *I Want You*.
- K is for KRAMER, STANLEY, of whom hopes are still high in spite of *Cyrano*. The most independent and enterprising of Hollywood producers, he will show in 1952 *Death of a Salesman*, *The Member of the Wedding*, *My Six Convicts*, *Ethan Frome*, and films by Zinnemann and Dmytryk. He is also bringing Mary Pickford back to the screen in *The Library*.
- L is for LOSS. A great director, Robert Flaherty, died this year, and a great actor, Louis Jouvet. We also mourn that engaging king of two-reel comedies, Leon Errol.
- M is for MILESTONE, LEWIS. Delayed for six years, his *A Walk in the Sun* at last arrived in February; then, ironically enough, his latest film, *Halls of Montezuma*, followed within a few weeks. The cinema is strewn with betrayals, but this is somehow the most mysterious of them all. Men in war have been the inspiration of Milestone's finest and most humane films: the progression from *All Quiet* to *A Walk in the Sun*, from pacifism to intellectual acceptance of war combined with emotional revulsion, was understandable. From *A Walk in the Sun* to *Halls of Montezuma* was not a progression but an ignoble retreat.
- Mc is for McBOING BOING, GERALD, the year's wittiest and most enjoyable cartoon. United Productions of America, who were responsible for it, have also produced a series centred on an agreeable but disastrously near-sighted character, Mr. Magoo. Colour, draughtsmanship, design and music are all bright and sophisticated, like a good *New Yorker* cover.
- N is for NEW TALENT. The year has yielded no first film by a director of outstanding promise, but *David* confirmed the gifts of Paul Dickson, now temporarily lost to the National Film Board of Canada, and *Domenica d'Agosto* those of Luciano Emmer, already distinguished for his short films. Pat Jackson's *White Corridors* was a good professional achievement. Amongst writers, new names on the credits were Annette Wademant (*Edouard et Caroline*) and Michael Wilson (*A Place in the Sun*, with Harry Brown.) Amongst players, *Teresa* introduced Pier Angeli and

John Ericson: Anita Bjork was a memorable *Miss Julie*; Oskar Werner made a remarkable debut in *Decision before Dawn*; and the otherwise disappointing *Born Yesterday* confirmed Judy Holliday as a comedienne.

- O is for OLVIDADOS, LOS: already shown by the New London Film Society, and soon to be publicly shown in London, this unforgettable film marks the return to the cinema of Luis Bunuel after an absence of seventeen years. A savage and despairing account of Mexican slum youths, it reminds us that Bunuel is one of the most little-known and original talents of the cinema. How many people have seen *L'Age d'Or*, which makes every other surrealist film look vapid? (Only one print is said now to exist, since the Paris police burned all the others in 1930.) Now the surrealist has turned realist, and few films in recent years have contained images so powerful and disturbing.
- P is for PERFORMANCES. Apart from the occasions already listed, 1951 has seen some excellent acting. Montgomery Clift in *A Place in the Sun*; Daniel Gélin in *La Ronde* and *Edouard et Caroline*; Richard Basehart and Agnes Moorehead in *Fourteen Hours*; Valentina Cortese in *Donne Senza Nome*; Danielle Darrieux in *La Ronde*; Patricia Collinge in *Teresa*; John Garfield in *The Breaking Point*; Alec Guinness in *The Lavender Hill Mob*; Kay Walsh in *Encore*; Diana Dors in *Lady Godiva Rides Again*; Marlene Dietrich in *No Highway*; Robert Walker in *Strangers on a Train*; Shelley Winters in *A Place in the Sun* and *He Ran All the Way*. Most neglected and ill-served players of the year: Dorothy McGuire, Barbara Bel Geddes, Richard Conte. Most ill-advised: Bette Davis (to make *Another Man's Poison*). Most tiring: George Sanders.
- Q is for QUESTIONS. (1) What has happened to *Cry the Beloved Country*? (2) What specialist cinema is going to be enterprising enough to show Peter Lorre's *Der Verlorene*, the Japanese prizewinner at Venice, *Rasho Mon*, and de Sica's *Miracolo a Milano*? (3) Could American producers find some new film composers?
- R is for REVIVALS. There have been a few good ones this year, including *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *You Only Live Once*, *Paris Qui Dort*, and some old favourites such as *The Italian Straw Hat*. A poll in SIGHT AND SOUND revealed a strong desire to see *Citizen Kane* again, and also any Garbo films, *They Were Expendable*, *Modern Times*, *Meet Me in St. Louis* and Fritz Lang's *M* (instead of which we got a remake). There is, alas, little to report on this front, except that the interesting *All that Money can Buy* is on the market again, and *The Magnificent Ambersons* will be shortly. The rest are as sorely missed as ever.
- S is for SERIALS, and SCIENTIFICTION, which at present are practically SYNONYMOUS. The Cameo, Charing Cross Road, is the temple of serials—why didn't they press show *King of the Rocket Men*, which had the twelve most action-packed episodes seen since *The Purple Monster Strikes*, and put *Atom Man v. Superman* (both of whom are getting rather dreary) quite to shame? (The cinema itself, too, is well worth a visit for the display of fanmail in the foyer, the prize exhibit being a letter from a man in Ireland who asked if it was worth a special trip to see *The Body Beautiful*.) Scientifiction, whether tabloid or otherwise, is developing the implications of popular folklore, not least in the shades of allegory, conscious or unconscious, that are creeping over it. Every Thing from another planet is malevolent: every inventor of ray gadgets etc. mad and hell-bent on destruction—the equation of the wonders of science with an instinctive desire to expunge mankind is unnervingly pessimistic.

Scientifiction experts regard the present trend as retrogressive: twenty years ago, they say, the movement was healthily optimistic. But they, like us, are powerless to prevent it.

T is for THRILLERS, of which, like comedy, there has been a scarcity. The only notable one, in fact, has been Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*; though imperfect, it suggests a rejuvenation of the master's style, and is certainly his best film for several years. He remains a lone worker in the field. The thriller itself seems to be passing away, replaced by the social melodrama (*The Sound of Fury* and, more notably, Billy Wilder's *Ace in the Hole* were strong examples of the taut, well made, ambivalent muckrakers) and the inter-planetary shocker. How far away the world of *The Spy*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Rome Express* seems now: spies are taken so much more seriously, and murderers so much more psychologically.

U is for U.S.S.R., from which a few films have made their way, breaking an unofficial taboo of three years. One salutes the enterprise of the company distributing *Ballerina*, *Tale of Siberia*, *Kuban Cossacks*—but couldn't it find something a little better? The synchronised version of *Storm Over Asia*, for instance, which was shown with considerable success in Paris; and one would welcome revivals rather than indifferent contemporary product—*The Youth of Maxim*, or *We From Kronstadt*, or *The Road to Life*.

V is for VAUDEVILLE. Song and dance has not been as spirited as it should this year, and too many musicals have fallen back on the 20's without properly recapturing them. How enjoyable *Tea for Two* might have been—splendid tunes, nostalgic cheerfulness; but courage failed. Even Grable has disappointed recently: we have had to content ourselves with the charming Doris Day, surviving indifferent colour, material and staging, and Astaire performing two brilliant dances in the peculiar *Wedding Bells*.

W is for WEIRDIES. Every year the cinema throws up a few really freakish films, pretentious, absurd, or sinister. 1951 was no exception. There was *People Will Talk*, in which Joseph L. Mankiewicz used a most improbable story, contrived the most turgid dialogue, and took the most unconscionable time to make the relatively simple point that doctors should allow human as well as medical considerations to influence their work. There was *Prehistoric Women*, in Cinecolour, a Stone Age Romance starring lovely Laurette Ruez: six strictly post-neolithic cuties faced with the problem of perpetuating their tribe. There was Alexis Smith as a policewoman with a father-complex in *Undercover Girl*. . . .

X is for X CERTIFICATE, on which there is one note to add to a previous editorial. The fact that *Detective Story* is the first American film with an X to secure a circuit booking, and has apparently done very well, may have some interesting bearing on the future. X means the loss of the family audience, which distributors are usually not prepared to face; but if an X film can do satisfactory business in spite of this, the result may encourage producers and directors to take an occasional chance.

Y is for YOU—that is you, dear readers, and you, dear critics who have mentioned us in your columns. To the first, our thanks for continuing to read us at 1/6d. and 3/6d., as monthly and quarterly; to the second, our thanks for encouraging the first.

Z is for ZINNEMANN, FRED, whose film *Teresa* was unjustly manhandled by the critics. Its story of an emotionally adolescent G.I., who falls in love with and marries an Italian girl, brings her back to New York and his neurotically possessive mother, was interestingly conceived; though it ended badly, much of the handling was fresh and sensitive, the performances excellent, and the sense of atmosphere, both in Italy and New York, outstanding. Zinnemann's is an individual talent of much potentiality.



A sad event that must be recorded is the closing down of *Sequence*, of which the final issue appeared at Christmas. Why this had to be, the editorial makes plain and further comment superfluous: and the reputation, the achievements of *Sequence* do not need official tribute. Rather, read the issue itself. *Ave atque vale*. The loss will be felt.



BEST OF THE YEAR

We wrote to a number of well-known people asking them what films they had most enjoyed in 1951—not necessarily new films, but ones they had seen for the first time.

RUBY M. AYRES

I am not really a Film Fan!—but the two I have much enjoyed recently are *Morning Departure* and Charlie Chaplin's revival. I still think he is the greatest of all film stars! I also like Walt Disney's films and the News Reels—but although you may be shocked, I often feel sure that the Glamour Girls and most popular Film Stars, could never do the things they are supposed to do! Gary Cooper is another man I admire, but give me Charlie Chaplin every time! he is always so very natural and his every gesture is eloquent.

Hoping I shall not have made myself unpopular by this reply to your letter!!

CECIL BEATON

The Man in the White Suit.
The Lavender Hill Mob.
No Highway.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

I am afraid I very seldom go to films and am nearly always disappointed. But *City Lights* was a masterpiece!

AGATHA CHRISTIE

The Lavender Hill Mob. Excellent—Good acting, original plot, and very amusing.

No Highway. Very good and gripping.

Seven Days to Noon. Quite good thriller—nice shots of London.

A delightful film about Seals—ungratefully can't now remember the name of it.

T. E. B. CLARKE

Fourteen Hours. In spite of its facile 'Box Office' ending, I was held in suspense throughout this fine sensitive picture when I first saw it, and my admiration for its makers was doubled when I saw it again at the Venice Festival with an unhappy but most moving and 'right' ending.

On the Town. I had been chasing this picture for a long time and finally caught up with it at a small village fleapit. I thought I should never see a better musical than *Meet Me in St. Louis*, but I now put this one on the same level.

The Man in the White Suit. For an analytical study of good picture-making, this film provides in my opinion the object lesson of 1951.

C. DAY LEWIS

Jour de Fête.
Edouard et Caroline.
The Lavender Hill Mob.

JOHN GIELGUD

Paris Waltz.
Beaver Valley.
The Lavender Hill Mob.

TREVOR HOWARD

No Highway, for all round excellence.

Hey Hey U.S.A. for making me laugh more than any modern comedy.

La Ronde.

CELIA JOHNSON

I have seen remarkably few films this year, but I especially enjoyed: *La Ronde*, which is a treat, and brilliantly directed and acted, and unthinkable except as a French conception. I should like Mr. Breen to see it and think again about his rules and regulations. (No. Perhaps he'd better not.)

The Magnet, a delightful and unpretentious film—almost excellent throughout.

Seven Days to Noon.

The Lavender Hill Mob.

Sunday in August.

These are not placed in order of preference but simply as I remember them.

MICHAEL POWELL

La Ronde—because of its good taste and because of the performance of Anton Walbrook, which is the best sophisticated comedy-performance since Chaplin gave us Menjou.

Cristo Proibito—because it was the best development in black and white photography and composition for many years. The cameraman was Hungarian and was trained, I believe, in England. I could write an essay on the photography and its origins; and the way it expressed the emotions of the director—but I won't. There are too many essays already.

RONALD SEARLE

As a very casual cinemagoer (through force of circumstances) the only symposium in which I *should* qualify for entry is that which could embrace Good Films I Have Missed. But despite the distinction that I have missed more good films than most people, I hardly believe I should have capped *La Ronde*, which I first saw at a Foreign Legionnaire corrugated iron fleapit in Morocco. I found myself in the rare state of being completely satisfied with its combination of wit, sure production and technique—to say nothing of its sophisticated amorality. One of the few films which urged me to clap at the screen. The only point I have against it was its theme song. Too catchy. I still annoy myself by humming it constantly.

PETER USTINOV

My favourite film for this year was *Justice est Faite*—the most adult and disturbing work, splendidly and unobtrusively directed, and with acting from Roquevert and Bussières, to name only two, which is inspired. I have enjoyed other films immensely, but it will be a form of homage to leave the Cayatte film by itself—hors concours—a masterpiece which transcends any necessity for dissection. For me, it is the year's only surrender.

MAI ZETTERLING

La Ronde. The excellence of the individual performances, and the direction.

Edouard et Caroline. Slight story, but beautifully directed, with charm and humour, the central couple being portrayed with great sensibility.

The Mother (Pudovkin). This silent film still has great power to move me, I saw the first part without any music, but the wonderful rhythm of the film carried its own music. The wonderful performance of Vera Baranovskaia, as the mother.

People . . . and . . . Films

LONDON

Fresh talents: small-scale production on a continuous basis: and, in **John Grierson's** words, "throwing all artificial and adventurous charges out of our budgets", are the principles animating Group 3, which moved into Southall Studios a few months ago with a National Film Finance Corporation grant to cover its first year's activities, and has now completed four pictures. The achievement of four films in not much over six months is an indication of the careful and efficient planning behind the venture, which has a board of directors comprising, in addition to Grierson, **Sir Michael Balcon**, **John Baxter** and **J. H. Lawrie**. A trade observer, from the *Kinematograph Weekly*, commented recently that "I have not seen another studio where the comparatively limited space is so usefully and constantly employed". This is praise indeed.

The problems that surround such an undertaking should not be underestimated. Group 3 started with the inestimable advantage



Joan Collins, Group 3 discovery, appears in "Judgment Deferred"

of N.F.F.C. backing and a distribution guarantee, and a policy of developing young talent. But the young talent needed experience behind it, both for the smooth running of production methods and the actual supervision of its creative development; also, it was obviously necessary for Group 3's first productions to inspire commercial confidence. Thus the first film, *Judgment Deferred*, was produced and directed by **John Baxter**, an experienced film-maker with a popular touch. It is a melodrama with a London setting, contains some established players (**Hugh Sinclair**, **Leslie Dwyer**) as well as some comparatively new to films (**Helen Shingler**) and a "discovery", **Joan Collins**, who has now been taken over by Ealing. *Brandy for the Parson*, a smuggling comedy by **Geoffrey Household**, much of it shot on location in Dorset, was personally supervised by Grierson, who hopes "it will be in the **Jerome K. Jerome** tradition". The unit and the players are all young: director, **John Eldridge**, cameraman, **Martin Curtis** (who photographed Eldridge's *Waverley Steps* and *Three Dawns to Sydney*), players, **James Donald**, **Jean Lodge** and **Kenneth More**.

Young directors, with experienced producers behind them, are also in charge of *Nothing to Lose* and *What Say They*. The first, produced by **Herbert Mason**, is a comedy centred on the figure of an agreeable tramp (played by **Eddie Byrne**) and based, in Grierson's words, "on the simple, but I hope civilised idea, that maybe someone somewhere shouldn't work as hard as they keep on telling us to do". The director is **Lewis Gilbert**, whose handling of *There is*



"Brandy for the Parson". James Donald and smugglers.

Another Sun showed a distinct promise surviving indifferent script and playing. *What Say They*, produced by **John Baxter**, is from a little-known **James Bridie** comedy, with a Glasgow University setting and some disrespectful academic satire. The director is **Terry Bishop**, who made *Daybreak in Udi*, and the players include **Duncan Macrae** and **Joseph Tomelty**.

Other directors that Group 3 intends to employ are **Frank Worth**, **Jill Craigie** and **Phil Leacock**, whose subjects will be respectively a spy story, a comedy about the tourist trade in a seaside town, and a mining disaster. The discovery of new directors is, of course, restricted by Union regulations—which means that, for the moment, they will have to come from inside the industry—but the field is completely clear for the development of fresh writers and players. (Concerning the latter, Grierson is particularly hopeful.) Certain general trends can already be noted: the use of real backgrounds for indigenous stories, and the logical choice of directors who have worked in documentary to work on them: the determination both to find "different" stories (the **Bridie**, and *Nothing to Lose*), and to reanimate popular genres of comedy and melodrama. Group 3 can only be judged, of course, on results; and these are awaited with great interest.

JAMES MORGAN.



Eddie Byrne, in "Nothing to Lose".



HOLLYWOOD

Two recently completed films of interest and promise are *Singing in the Rain* (above) and *Talk About a Stranger* (below).

Singing in the Rain is directed by **Gene Kelly** and **Stanley Donen**, who collaborated so successfully on *On the Town*. This new musical, choreographed by Kelly, has a background of Hollywood in the twenties. It introduces many tunes and personalities of the times, and has a long ballet sequence reviving the style of the original *Broadway Melody*. The leading players, seen in these two stills, are **Gene Kelly**, **Debbie Reynolds** and **Donald O'Connor**.

Talk About a Stranger is the first film made by **David Bradley** under his new contract at M.G.M.. Bradley's amateur versions of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* won him this contract. His film, a subject chosen by himself, is the study of a young boy, played by **Billy Gray**, who believes that a mysterious neighbour in the next-door house has killed his dog, and develops a ferocious hatred for him. The background is a small town. Bradley was allowed considerable freedom to experiment, during a 21-day shooting schedule.





PARIS

With a rather unstable financial set-up in many French productions, it is not uncommon for a film to be held up for lack of funds in the middle of shooting. Such a mishap befell **Max Ophüls**, whose producers suddenly decided not to supply the necessary finance to complete *Le Plaisir*. The first of the three Maupassant stories, *Le Masque*, was already shot, the second and most elaborate, *La Maison Tellier*, almost finished, and *La Femme de Paul* ready to go on the floor. After weeks of anxiety and persistent negotiations, another company took over. In the meantime the season for exterior shooting had passed, and the last sketch had to be replaced by another Maupassant story, *Le Modèle*, with **Simone Simon** and **Daniel Gélin** in the leading parts. "In the end this change may prove all to the good", Ophüls remarked philosophically. *Le Plaisir* is now in the cutting room.

Henri-Georges Clouzot seems to find himself in the same unfortunate position. After his marriage to a Brazilian actress two years ago he had gone to Brazil, with the intention of settling there. He came back disappointed, and a little later decided to adapt **Georges Arnaud's** novel *Le Salaire de la Peur*. **Yves Montand** and **Charles Vanel** and Clouzot's Brazilian wife **Vera** were cast. The story concerns a group of truck drivers who agree to transport highly explosive nitroglycerine across the desert for a 1000 dollar bonus. Nervous strain and tension are the main elements of action. Clouzot started shooting the film towards the end of August, on the wide plains of the Camargue province. The unit has been working there for over three months, and malicious commentators in Paris suggest that Clouzot obviously begrudges **Carné** his reputation of being the most expensive French director.

A mishap of another kind held up the work of **Jean Renoir**, who had for some time been preparing to make *La Carrosse d'Or*, with **Anna Magnani**, in Rome: an Italo-French co-production. The story is an adaptation of a **Merimée** story that Renoir himself once produced on the stage. Renoir suddenly fell ill, and had to undergo an operation for the removal of a bullet splinter, obtained in the first world war, from his body. He is slowly recovering, and is expected to return to Cine-Citta in the New Year.

The production of other French films has been interrupted for "seasonal" reasons. Units returning to Paris from location work met difficulties in finding a suitable studio, and had to postpone work: this happened to **Jacques Tati** who, after almost two years' preparation has begun a new picture, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*.

Jacques Becker returned to the studio after location work not far from Paris. His players—**Simone Signoret**, **Serge Reggiani**, **Claude Dauphin**—wore the costumes of spivs and gangsters in the 1900's, to re-enact some actual events on which Becker, together with **Jacques Companeez**, based the script. The film derives its title *Casque d'Or* from the nickname of the character played by **Simone Signoret**, the prototype of a turn-of-the-century gun-moll.



Above and below: scenes from "La Maison Tellier", one of the episodes in Max Ophüls' new film, "Le Plaisir", which contains three Maupassant stories. "La Maison Tellier" is the story of a brothel-keeper who takes all her girls to her godchild's first communion in a Norman village. Above, **Danielle Darrieux** as **Rosa**, one of the hours. Below, **Rosa**, during her night at the farm, feels lonely and takes the godchild into her bed. Above, left: **Tellier** and troupe at the farmhouse. **Madeleine Renaud** (standing, second from left) as **Madame**: centre, seated, **Ginette Leclerc** and **Danielle Darrieux**.

At a time when every producer's eye seems to watch the shooting schedule with particular anxiety, one producer has achieved something of a miracle. Old **Sacha Guitry** made a "perfect murder" comedy, *Paul Braconnier*, with **Michel Simon**, in record time: 12 days and 3 hours.

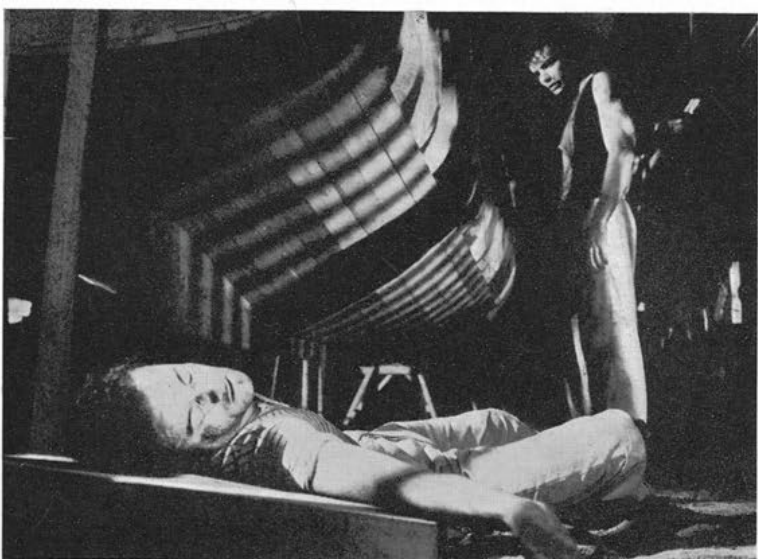
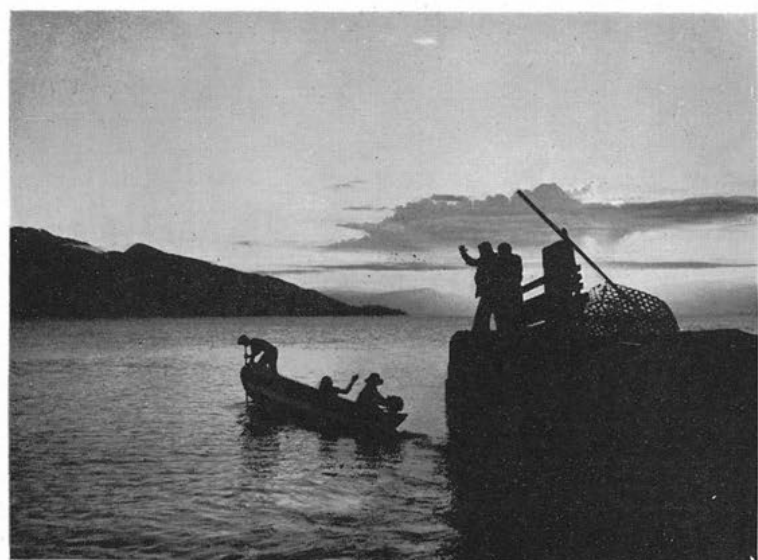
FRANCIS KOVAL.

BRAZIL

Letter from Cavalcanti

Many of my friends in the British film industry have asked me to let them know about my work in Brazil. Many British technicians took part in this adventure, so I will try to describe not only our experience at the start, but our plans for the future.





Scenes from Cavalcanti's first two productions in Brazil. Top, "Terra e Sempre Terra". Centre and below, "Caicara"

In our first year, during which the studios near Sao Paulo were being equipped, we produced two full-length features, two art documentaries, had started on a third feature, and had three further shooting scripts ready, as well as two more well under way.

The business people thought by then that they knew all about film production. . . .

Intrigue, ambitions, and the racketeering methods common to most new countries, brought matters to a head: my contract as producer was broken, and only part of the indemnity paid. There being no trade unions, nothing could be done to protect me. To mutual regret, I had to leave, and departed with most of my unit. Realising that under present conditions it was quite impossible to produce films in Brazil, I didn't quite know what to do, and even considered returning to work in Europe.

Luckily the new President of the Republic, Getulio Vargas, heard about the situation, called me, and asked what was really wrong—why other South American countries, like Mexico and Argentina, had flourishing film industries and Brazil practically nothing? I told him of my bitter experience, and of the measures that could be taken to remedy things. He asked me not to leave, and two months later, in Rio, I was working—with the help of a unit that included technicians who had followed me from Sao Paulo—on a survey of both Government and private film-making, as well as developing a new official organization: *The National Institute of Cinema*.

Meanwhile, in the Chamber of Deputies, a parliamentary commission has been set up to administrate the new cinema, together with theatre and radio in Brazil. The National Institute of Cinema will be an organization to control the whole field of Government film production and the film industry itself. This doesn't mean that the Institute will be a dictator of the cinema. The object is to amplify existing legislation (which has never been properly enforced before now) and protect film-makers from adventurers who try their hand at production.

At the moment, there are many cases of films never completed because of a lack of financial integrity, or through technical incompetence on the part of self-styled directors. These bogus producers and directors are never the losers. The victims are always the artists and technicians who suddenly find themselves out of a job and owed a lot of money. Stricter legislation is the only way of putting a stop to this.

The Institute will consist of several departments; the most important, I believe, will be the section concerned with legislation—planning, protecting and encouraging the film industry—and the National Film Library. The latter is important because it is impossible to educate and form good technicians who have no knowledge of the classics of the cinema. By making outstanding films available, I hope the National Film Library will play an important part in the future of the Brazilian cinema.

A department of control will see that quota laws and the percentages due from exhibitors to distributors and from distributors to producers are respected: other sections include a department for the production and distribution of documentaries and, alas, a department of censorship. The documentary department will make all kinds of documentary films for the various Government ministries. Some of this work will be given to independent producers on a cost plus basis, similar to that used by the C.O.I. in Britain. Owing to the large number of bogus producers who crop up periodically in Brazil, each film company has now to register itself after an inspection of its books and its technical resources. Only registered firms will be eligible for Government contracts.

The question of censorship is of course delicate; our policy will be one of encouragement rather than stricture. We do not intend to prejudice any production, however bad (the public must be trusted to look after that), but rather to encourage in various ways—such as through tax concessions—worthy attempts at raising the standard of Brazilian film production. I believe that if we encourage the production of good films, bad ones will begin to suffer by comparison. To an Englishman this may sound too optimistic, but few of you can have any idea of the appallingly low technical standard and entertainment value of a bad Brazilian film.

As soon as all these recommendations we have made are made law, the Institute will start work and I will go back to the industry. We are now preparing a distribution organization, and I have my own plans for feature production. I am very optimistic about the work of Brazilian writers. Brazilian stories, folklore and landscape are as yet almost unexploited—we tried to make a start with this in our two original productions, *Caicara* and *Terra e Sempre Terra*. One of my personal ambitions is to do a co-production with a British company: a collaboration between Britain and Brazil could lead to interesting results for both countries.

IN THE PICTURE

The economic situation of the British film industry during 1951 affords several interesting points of comparison with 1950. Although figures are not as yet available for a full survey of the year, it is possible to arrive at some valid conclusions by comparing figures for such periods as are available with the corresponding records for 1950.

British Production

DURING THE first nine months of the year, 50 British first features were trade shown (corresponding figure for the same period of 1950, 52 features). By November 19th a further 10 first features had been trade shown, indicating a total for the year little different from 1950's 64.

During the same period 41 second features were trade shown.

The Rank Organisation continues to sponsor production and to provide distribution facilities through G.F.D. Up to the end of November, 1951, 16 first features, including 4 from Ealing Studios, were released through G.F.D. (total for 1950, 19 features, including 5 from Ealing). London Films and the Wilcox-Neagle company, also releasing through British Lion, produced respectively 5 and 2 films during the first eleven months of the year (figures for 1950, 9 and 1). A.B.P.C. produced 5 first features during the eleven month period, against a total of 8 for 1950.

Up to the end of November, American companies (M.G.M., Fox, Warners and R.K.O.) had shown 5 films made in this country: *Captain Horatio Hornblower R.N.*, *No Highway*, *Calling Bulldog Drummond* and *The House in the Square* (total for 1950, 7 films). 4 features—*Another Man's Poison*, *Mr. Drake's Duck*, *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* and *I'll Get You for This*—were in part American financed. An interesting development was Exclusive's deal with Robert Lippert guaranteeing American distribution for films to be made in England, employing some American stars, including Zachary Scott, Elizabeth Scott and Robert Preston.

At the end of November M.G.M., Warners and R.K.O. had completed several other British productions, including *Ivanhoe*, *Robin Hood*, *Where's Charley?* and *The Crimson Pirate*.

National Film Finance Corporation

In November the National Film Finance Corporation announced loans during the period April-September, 1951, to 20 productions, together with approval given to British Lion for the making of 5 films (loans are not made to these productions individually, since they come under the original £3,000,000 loan made to British Lion by the N.F.F.C.). The figure for the same period of 1950 was 25 films.

The N.F.F.C. loans are divided among a number of independents, including A.C.T. Films, Renown (*Scrooge*), Molton Films (*The Gift Horse*), Conquest Productions (*The Penny Princess*) and several companies specialising in second features, and the three groups: British Film Makers (*The Card*, *Hunted*), the Elstree Group and Group 3.

Continental Releases

During the first 11 months of the year a total of 39 films from the Continent were released; 21 from France, 11 from Italy, 3 from Russia (distributed by a new company, Concorde), and the first Russian films to reach Britain for some

years), and 1 each from Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Sweden. There was also *Native Son*, made in South America by a French director. This compares with a total of about 50 continental films released during 1950.



"The Battle of British Films", as the *Financial Times* recently headed an article, may have reached a turning point during 1951, when the revised Eady Plan brought reinforcements on to the field for the hard-pressed producers. On the surface, as the figures given above indicate, things appear much the same. The number of films made varies little from the totals of 1949 and 1950, although the differences with the A.C.T. may mean a slight reduction in studio activity over the last quarter of the year. The proportion of studio space in use—about two-thirds—is relatively unchanged; the number of films receiving N.F.F.C. loans is almost exactly the same.

Production by American companies in Britain accounts for a numerically small but financially significant proportion of this year's total. But in spite of the additional inducement to production in this country contained in the latest Anglo-American agreement, it seems unlikely that American companies will expand these activities. Fox, for instance, have already brought to at least a temporary halt their production at Denham.

In the U.S.A., the Gallup organisation produced figures in August showing that the number of cinema seats sold each week had fallen to 53 million from the all-time high of 80 million in 1946. In Britain, 31½ million tickets a week were sold in 1946, and about 27 million in 1950. 1951 may be expected to show a slight further falling off, but from the point of view of receipts this should be offset by the rise in the price of cinema seats.



But if the figures seem to indicate no change, the reports to shareholders in the three major companies, Odeon Theatres, British Lion and A.B.P.C., suggest something different. Optimism has not been a feature of these reports in recent years. This time all showed a degree of cautious confidence. Mr. Drayton said that "it should now be possible to plan a series of productions with the reasonable expectation of recovering costs from this country alone and in a shorter period than hitherto". Sir Philip Warter "welcomed the extension" of the Eady plan, which should "go a long way to foster a stable and successful British film production industry". Mr. Rank, in effect, summed up when he said that the Plan should mean that "serious producers" will be enabled "to produce in the future a group of films which will show a profit".

The Eady Plan, however, provides a long term solution, since its aid to producers is dependent on the takings at the box office, and so is not immediately apparent. The objective of the National Film Finance Corporation was to aid British production until such a time as "the confidence of the private investor is restored". This confidence, severely shaken over several years, is unlikely to return automatically because the Eady Plan indicates that film production can become a profitable business. The N.F.F.C., meanwhile, fills the gap by providing a stable and continuing source of finance. Its £6 million, however, is now nearly exhausted, and whether the additional £2 million promised by the Socialist Government will still be forthcoming is not known at the time of writing.

The economic future of the industry rests, in the long run, with the private investor; it will take a bank balance safely out of the red to prove to him that film production represents a reasonable investment. From his point of view, 1951 may prove to have been a significant and encouraging year.

DEBATE WITH A PAST SELF

ROGER MANVELL

considers some arguments in a book recently published by

RENÉ CLAIR

LIKE SO MANY outstanding composers and painters, the chief film-makers have been peculiarly reticent on paper. Of course there are the usual exceptions whose books and articles appear for a moment to contradict this statement—Eisenstein, Pudovkin, John Grierson and Paul Rotha, for example. René Clair can now be added to this small number of film directors whose reflections on the cinema can be found in books. In *Reflexion Faite*¹ he had the happy idea of arguing with his youthful self in the form of comments on extensive quotations from articles he wrote, for the most part, 25 years ago, when he was in the advance guard of French film-making during the 1920's. Although the years have brought a certain seriousness and sense of discretion to this director, after his experiences in the French, British and American studios, René Clair 1950 seems for the most part still to agree with the fundamental arguments of René Clair 1923. He gives his own reason for this:

My aim, in publishing these notes to-day, is to bring to light again various problems posed by the cinema during a vital stage of its development, problems which have lost none of their importance in spite of this development. Perhaps young people interested in these problems will find it useful to compare their own ideas with those of somebody whose youth belongs to the past.

The problems of writing film history are peculiar. Not nearly enough of the films one most needs to study survive, and, when they do survive, they are for one reason or another only too often scattered and inaccessible. The most helpless of critics is the one from whom a key-work is withheld, and all film historians suffer continually from this form of frustration. This makes the views of film-makers and critics writing in the past from the direct experiences of their time all the more important. *Reflexion Faite* recalls the true spirit and feeling of the 20's in France. It shows us the urgent need felt by young film-makers of a quarter of a century ago to discover the *sens du cinema*, and how, in Clair's words, "to have the sense of cinema is to serve it for those ends most proper to its nature". That is the real reason he has published this debate between René Clair 1923-35 and René Clair 1950.

II

René Clair 1923 realised that he belonged to a new age, and that the nineteenth century had finally died in 1914. With the pioneer's enthusiastic iconoclasm he wanted to use the film to break clear from the tyranny of expression through words. He felt the need for himself and others of a new kind of education based on the speed and subtlety of observation—

the direct recognition of what is significant in the experience of life without the verbal conglomerations of either literature or the text-book.

R.C. 1923. The public should be sent to a school where it would learn nothing. . . . Your minds would be cleared, dear millions of friends, of all the waste of out-of-date literature, of all the artistic anodynes absorbed from childhood that prevent you looking at the world and at a work of art with an individual eye. . . . The wastes of literature: Michel Zevaco, Stendhal, Mallarmé, children's comics, ministerial speeches, etc. . . . What the cinema asks of you is to learn to SEE.

R.C. 1950. It would seem difficult to take the expression of this kind of *mystique* of cinema any further. As was fashionable at the time, your intentions betray a note of inspiration and the taste for being provocative, so you bring up Stendhal and Mallarmé just to point out, surely, that you are ready to sacrifice anything?

R.C. 1923 (*who has preferred not to hear this last remark*). If I could give you a course in oblivion, I could turn you into fine savages. In front of the screen, blank at first, you would marvel at elementary visions: a leaf, a hand, water, an ear; then: a tree, a body, a river, a face; then: wind in the leaves, a man walking, a river flowing, simple facial expressions. In the second year, you would answer visual riddles. You would be taught the outlines of a provisional syntax. You would have to follow the meaning of various series of images, as a child or foreigner little by little guesses the meaning of sounds that he hears. . . .

The new art created a kind of free association of meaning, the infinite combination of ideas and sensations created by the visual *montage* of the more experimental films of the period.

R.C. 1923. Don't always expect a masterpiece. Be content, sometimes, to be carried away on a stream of images. Thirty seconds of pure cinema in a film lasting one hour should be enough to keep up our hopes. If we ignore the absurdity of the story and abandon ourselves to the charm of flowing images, forgetting the reason for them, we can taste a new pleasure. Images: a moving countryside passes. A hand appears. The prow of a boat. The smile of a woman. Three trees in the sky. Images. . . . Don't tell me what they mean according to the arbitrary laws of your language. It is enough to see them, to be pleased by their harmony and their contrasts. Let us learn how to look at what is in front of us. Words have assumed an exaggerated importance. We know most word combinations by heart. We have eyes and we still don't see.

A new way of artistic life seemed to be open to those who were ready to discover the logic of the film. Articles and manifestos were published for the purpose, to quote Clair 1950, of "bringing to light the *super-natural* nature of the cinema". No one, maybe, knew quite what this was, but they believed in its existence and created a variety of rituals in its

¹ *Reflexion Faite*, Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'art cinématographique de 1920 à 1950. (N.R.F., Gallimard, Paris).

service, to be found in the avant-garde productions of the 20's.

1950. There was perhaps a secret hope, in evoking the "barbarity" and illogicality of the world of images, of discovering a logic and a particular order in it, but the important thing at that time was to maintain a state of "perfect non-attachment" and to ensure that the cinema maintained its new revolutionary character, which corresponded so exactly to a revolutionary period.

It seemed to Clair during those early years that there was a positive advantage, if you were to work in the cinema, in not being cultured in the literary sense. The American westerns and simple melodramas of action, the slapstick of that film purist Mack Sennett, the acrobatic delights of Fairbanks, the innocence of Charles Ray—these things were pointing in the right direction and bedding the roots of the film in the right soil. The films that went wrong were those with pretentious theatrical or literary ideals behind them—the *film d'art* movement in France, and its equivalent abroad, the heavy, slow-moving, grandiloquently titled adaptations of the classics and pseudo-classics, the melancholy muster of "well-made" plays from the nineteenth century theatre, which gave noble-faced and long-haired actors room to rotate their arms in gestures that were meaningless without the words these mimings were designed to emphasise. Clair points out the strange switch-over in the merits of comedy and drama in between the silent and sound film.

1950. Though it is difficult to compare the respective merits of comic and dramatic works . . . one can say that before 1928 the comic film had a number of successes to its credit which the dramatic film seldom equalled. Since the birth of the sound film, the contrary has occurred. With a few exceptions, all the films produced since 1928 that are worth preserving are dramatic films, while the vigour of comedy seems to have declined.

Nevertheless, the true vitality of the silent film shows through the shoddy pretentiousness of the literary film, and even to-day emphasises certain qualities which the sound film has forgotten.

1950. The "medieval" age of cinema, if one compares it to the present period, seems as rich in the variety of its invention as the Elizabethan epoch in theatrical history. You have only to re-issue an early Chaplin or Mack Sennett to make young people marvel at what they regard as extraordinary novelty. I can hear, however, the blockheads sneer: "These old films! Look at the costumes, the make-up, the exaggerated acting!" They should be sent back to Baudelaire's *Charogne*. From these old, decomposed films we can still preserve the "divine essence" of *invention*, which our modern films so singularly lack.

Mack Sennett stood out as a film-maker equal in his own sphere to Griffith himself.

1923. The swift and fresh lyricism of Mack Sennett opens a world of lightness to us. . . . His short comedies herald the reign of a lyric fantasy which will undoubtedly come to be the triumph of the cinema.

The virtue of their kind of film-making is that it could so often dispense altogether with words, and build up the significance of a scene entirely in terms of action, encouraging the imagination of the spectator to be alert and active.

1950. Dialogue and sound could be suggested by images (*the evidence of Jackie Coogan, Charles Ray begins to WHISTLE, a start at the least NOISE*) and the spectator's imagination did the rest.

This power of suggestion was so effective that, more than once,

I have heard people who know little of the history of the cinema insist that a particular old film was a talkie when in fact it was silent. People who remembered the action of the film very well, certain episodes in detail, even the names of the players, and believed they had *heard* the dialogue. This should give cause for reflection to those, even to-day, who refuse to admit the supremacy of the image in the cinema.

Clair finds this quality further developed in Griffith. He quotes an example from one of Griffith's lesser known later films, *One Exciting Night* (called in France *La Nuit Mystérieuse*), in which he compels his audience to imagine themselves involved in the action.

1923. Too often at the cinema spectators have the impression, tedious in the long run, of being gods who know all the reasons, the future as well as the past. Nothing is hidden from them. They are told everything, sometimes in advance. Griffith's boldness and skill, in *One Exciting Night*, was not to leave us outside the drama, but to involve us in it, let it play itself out in ourselves. He achieved this through a wonderfully disciplined montage. Images appeared momentarily; they suggested more than they explained; other images intervened just when the first ones began to explain something to us. This is cinema. Also, it is reality. We never know all the reasons behind even the simplest event. We could spend a lifetime vainly trying to find a logical explanation for everything we saw in the space of a single day. Leave a part for illogicality in drama. It is the only way of being logical with ourselves.

But, in Clair's opinion, the greatest artist in the silent cinema was undoubtedly Chaplin. His claims for him are very large but, as they seem to me, just. He reappears throughout the book as the master. He is the true head of the avant-garde as Clair specifically interprets that movement. ("The avant-garde is *spiritual curiosity* applied to a domain where the discoveries to be made are numerous and exciting".)

1927. If we want to apply the term avant-garde in its truest sense to those in the forefront of progress, many of us will struggle to deserve a place there. The true avant-garde exists. Charlie Chaplin, who with his first drama revolutionised the American dramatic cinema, is at its head.

Chaplin is also described elsewhere in the book as a true film-author as well as actor, the implication being that he is no writer of words but a creator of screen narrative in terms of moving images.

1950. The greatest film author, the best example for anyone aspiring to write a script, was Charlie Chaplin. But there are many who would doubt it. Even his most fervent admirers, dazzled by his acting, were not sufficiently aware that in a great film like *The Gold Rush*, or in a sketch like *The Pilgrim*, the skill in dramatic construction was equal to its comic invention.

His understanding of humanity as shown especially in *A Woman of Paris* (called in France *L'Opinion Publique*) proves him a great artist.

This film is not a minutely contrived drama but a series of human scenes. Its psychological truth, more interesting than its factual verisimilitude, appears under a pitiless light. For the first time, perhaps, characters in a drama are not the stylised puppets usually presented by the cinema; good, bad, ingenue, traitor. They are complex, and dominated by fatality. The scene where Pierre Revel wins back Marie with a few words reminds one, in the slightly disturbing quality of its charm, its apparent illogicality, of certain passages in Stendhal (Stendhaliens will understand). The psychological quality of *A Woman of Paris* is apparent

at the end of the film, when the spectator realises he cannot pass judgment on the characters in the light of the usual moral conventions of melodrama and the cinema. None of them is entirely evil, entirely good. Their actions depend a little on their will, much more on chance. They are human beings.

Clair also claims that de Sica is the true descendant of Chaplin. He is, I believe, again right. Chaplin's approach to life is comic-tragic and de Sica's tragi-comic; they meet at the point where their humanity is deepest.

III

Clair's quality as a critic of the cinema writing in the 20's lies not so much in his emphasis on points generally accepted by the "advance-guard" of the film (that the film was a visual art dependent for its main dramatic effect on the principles of editing, facts which had, in effect, been emphasised ten years earlier by Vachel Lindsay, for example), but rather in his emphasis on the essentially non-literary quality of the cinema. While he was critical of public taste and the lowering effect it had on film-makers who slavishly tried to serve the box-office, he recognised the complementary truth that the unaffected popularity of the film could be its greatest strength in a world where the other arts tried increasingly to serve specialised interests.

1950. Music, poetry, the plastic arts, seemed on the way to becoming closed compartments, with access possible only through an increasingly narrow door. . . . It is contact with the public that gives to the cinema, like waves to a pebble, its present form. The public is not creative but it lays down the law by choosing one entertainment in preference to another. Theatre and film producers who despair of guessing what the public wants can be consoled by the fact that the public itself has no more idea *in advance* than they. The public knows what it wants *after* it's had it. In this way it ends by imposing its taste, which may seem fixed until, faced with various formulas, it decides to choose something new—which one had no reason to believe would appeal to it.

IV

The coming of sound was obviously at first a serious blow to Clair. Of course, the first crudely theatrical talkies must have been acutely depressing after the brilliant fifteen years of silent film-making that had developed between *The Birth of a Nation* and Clair's own *Italian Straw Hat*. The arrival of sound played straight into the hands of the literary and theatrical influences which had always tried to mould the film in the model of the stage. These forces, Clair claims, are still at work in the majority of films, destroying their chance of visual magic, and that essential view into a world of sights in which the sensations of the eye are the only source of pleasure and revelation.

Yet Clair himself in his most highly imaginative group of films, made in France between 1929 and 1932, in a sense contradicts his own arguments in the best of all ways—that of artistic practice. The magic remains on the screen; the most delicate of all instruments, the human voice, and the most highly patterned and artificial of all sounds, musical composition, add their powers to that of the flow of moving pictures. The beauties of the silent film seem elementary and over-simplified in comparison with the multi-dimensional experience the interplay of sound and picture is able to create. One of the rare exceptions is the work in the silent film of Chaplin himself, but that is due to the very special nature of his art which, because it is largely mimetic and even acrobatic,

concentrates so much of its value and its humanity in the motions of his body and the expression of his face. Words are no more necessary to his art of the 20's than they are to the ballet.

I think the form this book takes favours Clair 1923, and gives the Clair 1950 too much of a spectator's role. A great deal of the argument, therefore, is historical in its context rather than contemporary, though Clair's original position as a purist is very evidently one he does not really want to modify to-day. Clair 1950, in fact, does not consider the work of many notable directors who have developed during the sound period; there is no assessment of Vigo or Renoir or Carné, of any American director, or any modern Italian except de Sica.

Words, Clair says in effect, clog the imagination and hinder its workings.

1929. Can the sound film become poetic? One fears that the precision of verbal expression will drive poetry from the screen, as it drives out the atmosphere of dreams. The imaginary words we give to these silent beings, to these dialogues in imagery, will always be more beautiful than any real phrases. *Screen heroes spoke to the imagination with the complicity of silence.* Tomorrow, they will speak trivialities we shall be powerless not to hear. For commercial film people, the height of film art is the most complete imitation of reality. The film will lose the charm it derived from its unreal character. On the subject of Talma and truth in the theatre, Chateaubriand wrote something that can be applied to the situation of the new talking-film: "*Once down to the level of truth in its material form only, you are forced to go on reproducing it, because the public, itself materially affected, demands it*".

Clair's case is that the well-developed observation of life by the visual artist, on the other hand, acts as a constant stimulant to the imagination, unfettered by the compromises of thought expressed through words. (Clair 1950 does not discuss his most recent film, *La Beauté du Diable*, in relation to this.) But, while I agree wholeheartedly in the case of flat dialogue—and flat films deserve and get flat dialogue—verbal poetry has its place in the film. Words are part of the experience of living, and it is the way they are used in a film either for dialogue or comment which makes them touch the imagination and emphasise with some additional value what one is watching on the screen.

To Clair, the dream element, so important in the effect of the silent film, seemed to be utterly destroyed by the intrusion of sound.

1923. Let us point out, in this connection, a spectator's state of mind in the cinema, which is not without its analogies to a dreamer's state of mind. The darkness of the hall, the enervating effect of music, the unreeling of shadows on a luminous screen, everything conspires to plunge the spectators into a state of half-dreaming, where the suggestive power of images exerts a sovereignty comparable to the visions that inhabit our sleep.

Because the drama was well established before the cinema came, too much of the action in film narrative is worked out in terms of dialogue; the novel even is more fortunate in this respect than the film.

1933. *If, by a trick of fate, the cinema had been invented before the earliest forms of theatrical expressions were conceived, it is certain that film authors would never have thought of expressing the most important passages of their films in dialogue. . . . The novel, which is lucky enough to follow its own rules, only uses dialogue*

(continued on page 136)

A FILM QUIZ

Some questions for addicts—how many can be answered without recourse to reference books? Total score that can be obtained is 142. If you get over 120, you are a true addict: if you get over 100, you are very good and well on the way to becoming one. Over 80 is good, and over 60 fair. If your score is under 60, more visits to the cinema are recommended. Answers on page 141.

1. What well known film director appeared as an actor in each of these films?

(a) City for Conquest. (b) The Living Corpse. (c) Intolerance. (d) La Règle du Jeu. (e) Rescued from an Eagle's Nest. (Total: 5)

2. In which Bette Davis film, did the star

(a) go blind, (b) fall on a cactus, (c) take to drink, (d) go mad in a courtroom, (e) go mad in a royal court, (f) jitterbug, (g) kill a famous conductor, (h) lose her hair? (Total: 8)

3. In which films did the following actors play the Devil?

(a) Claude Rains. (b) Walter Huston. (c) Emil Jannings. (d) Laird Cregar. (e) Gérard Philipe. (f) Jules Berry. (Total: 6)

4. Can you name the two films concerned in each case in which

(a) Fritz Lang remade a film by Jean Renoir, (b) Anatole Litvak remade a film by Carné, (c) Frank Capra remade a film by Frank Capra, (d) Charles Boyer replayed a part of Jean Gabin's, (e) Michael Rennie replayed a part of Pierre Fresnay's, (f) Laird Cregar replayed a part of Ivor Novello's? (Total: 12)

5. These directors have something notable in common. What is it?

Georges Méliès. Paul Czinner. William Dieterle. Orson Welles. George Cukor. (Total: 1)

6. Name two further film scores by the composers who wrote the music for:

(a) Our Town. (b) As You Like It. (c) Le Sang d'un Poète. (d) Where do we go from here? (Total: 8)

7. In what film did the heroine

(a) Hear bells, (b) hear voices, (c) hear nothing? (Total: 3)

8. The following films were made by famous directors outside their native countries. Name the directors.

(a) A Modern Hero. (b) Break the News. (c) Under the Red Robe. (d) Ultimatum. (e) Four Devils. (f) Western Union. (Total: 6)

9. Can you connect the following eight films with the following eight personalities, and specify the connection?

The Man Who Knew Too Much. All Quiet on the Western Front. The Outlaw. Emil and the Detectives. Hearts of the World. Elephant Boy. Monsieur Verdoux. The Blue Angel.

Gregg Toland. Michael Balcon. Orson Welles. Noel Coward. Erich Pommer. George Cukor. Charles Crichton. Billy Wilder. (Total: 16)

10. Can you name a film begun but never finished by

(a) Josef von Sternberg, (b) René Clair, (c) Jean Renoir, (d) Eisenstein, (e) Von Stroheim, (f) Lubitsch? (Total: 6)

11. Do you know in which films these lines of dialogue occur?

(a) "Monsieur le directeur, je vous dis merde!" (b) "Frederic, you must stop this polonaise jangle!" (c) "L'Oiseau chante avec ses doigts". (d) "You're something for the birds, Rosa, something for the birds". (e) "We're the people that live. Can't nobody wipe us out. Can't nobody lick us. We'll go on for ever, Pa. We're the people". (Total: 5)

12. A notable figure in contemporary literature appeared on the script credits of each of these films. Can you identify?

(a) Jane Eyre. (b) To Have and Have Not. (c) Lac Aux Dames. (d) The Great Sinner. (e) Men of Two Worlds. (f) David Copperfield. (g) Moontide. (Total: 7)

13. Before she made Sunset Boulevard, in 1950, Gloria Swanson had been absent from the screen for:

18 years; 13 years; 9 years; 7 years. And what was her previous film? (Total: 2)

14. In what film did

(a) Ingrid Bergman sing "You should see me dance the polka", (b) Montgomery Clift sing "Chagrin d'Amour", (c) Vivien Leigh sing "Pennies from Heaven", (d) Marlene Dietrich not sing at all? (Total: 4)

15. Can you name the first film directed by

(a) Carol Reed, (b) Basil Wright, (c) Elia Kazan, (d) René Clair, (e) Eisenstein, (f) Flaherty? (Total: 6)

16. Do you know who photographed

(a) Wuthering Heights, (b) La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, (c) Private Life of Henry VIII, (d) Old and New, (e) Fire Over England? (Total: 5)

17. The following foreign films are well known in this country under English titles. Can you say which titles are correct or incorrect translations—

and, in the latter case, what the correct translation would be?

(a) The Last Laugh, (b) The General Line, (c) Waxworks. (Total: 3)

18. Can you say which of these films, stars and directors won Oscars?

(a) Great Expectations, (b) Mutiny on the Bounty, (c) Mother Wore Tights, (d) Greta Garbo, (e) Bing Crosby, (f) William Wyler, (g) Josef von Sternberg, (h) Michael Curtiz. (Total: 8)

19. Which, in the version shown to the public, was the longest of these films?

(a) Gone with the Wind. (b) Greed. (c) Les Enfants du Paradis. (d) Intolerance.

And which, in its original version, was the longest? (Total: 2)

20. Hitchcock is noted for brief appearances in his own films. Can you say in which of his films he

(a) Came out of a lift in a hotel, (b) appeared in a reducing advertisement in a newspaper, (c) emerged from a train at a London station, (d) entered a train carrying a double bass? (Total: 4)

21. In 1936 John Grierson, Cavalcanti, W. H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, Stuart Legg and William Coldstream all collaborated on one film. What was it? (Total: 1)

22. These documentaries were made by directors noted for their work primarily in feature production. Can you name the directors?

(a) Spanish A.B.C. (b) Battle of the Midway. (c) Mechanism of the Brain. (d) The True Glory. (e) Memphis Belle. (f) Report from the Aleutians. (g) Aventure Malagache. (Total: 7)

23. Cyrano de Bergerac, The Lady with the Lamp, Show Boat, and A Place in the Sun, all recently seen in London, have all been made before. Can you say who, in the previous versions, played the parts now taken by

(a) Jose Ferrer, (b) Anna Neagle, (c) Kathryn Grayson, (d) Montgomery Clift? (Total: 4)

24. Who is

(a) Van Nest Polglase, (b) Farciot Edouart, (c) Bretagne Windust, (d) Mischa Bakaleinikoff, (e) Travis Banton, (f) Ketti Frings, (g) Albert S. D'Agostino, (h) Faith Domergue, (i) Pete Smith? (Total: 9)

IN THE SCRIPT

In this issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, and in succeeding ones, we shall present an extract from the script of a contemporary film. The four short extracts printed in our last issue showed the different kinds of shooting scripts with which various directors liked to go on the floor: this extract from "The Ant and the Grasshopper" story in *Encore* is presented as a sidelight on the technique of adaptation.

A reading of Somerset Maugham's original story (in the collection, *Here and There*) will give an idea of the problems involved. The story is in Maugham's most anecdotal form, no more than five pages long, a simple fable about two brothers: one, respectable, conventional, hard-working, the other irresponsible, charming, shiftless, continually asking his elder brother for a loan and, when that fails, tricking him into it. In the end the younger brother, much to his elder's astonishment and annoyance, inherits a fortune from a rich, elderly woman. (In the film, he marries an American millionairess, who buys the family mansion the elder brother is selling in order to raise money for a business partnership.) The problem in this adaptation is the reverse of the usual one: the screenwriter has to extend rather than select his material, to fill in character and detail, invent further incidents, dramatise situations that take only a line or two of Maugham's spare, undecorated prose.

ENCORE

"The Ant and the Grasshopper". Shooting script by T. E. B. Clarke. Directed by Pat Jackson. With Nigel Patrick as Tom, Roland Culver as George. This extract shows Tom's ingenious persecution of George, in order to extract a further £200 from him. Advised by George to find a job, Tom first of all becomes commissionaire at his brother's West End club, then barman at his favourite bar, then window-cleaner for his office block. All this occupies only eight lines of the original story.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to the J. Arthur Rank Organisation for permission to reprint this portion of the script.

30. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
MEDIUM LONG TWO SHOT to TIGHT TWO SHOT.
GEORGE and BATEMAN leaving lobby of club and walking down steps towards CAMERA.

BATEMAN: It sounds the sort of place we're looking for. I'll talk it over with my wife.

GEORGE: Perhaps you'll both dine with me one night?

BATEMAN: We'd be delighted.

GEORGE: Do you know Rinaldi's?

BATEMAN: Indeed I do.

GEORGE (to the doorman off scene): Oh, doorman.

31. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL. TOM turning into CAMERA.

TOM: Yes, sir.

32. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL. GEORGE reacting.
GEORGE: Call us. . . a. . . taxi. . . will you?

33. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
THREE SHOT, WIDE ANGLE. TOM strongly featured left foreground. He looks off camera left, raises his hand, puts two fingers into his mouth and gives out a piercing whistle. Right of screen are GEORGE and BATEMAN. BATEMAN goes on talking, unaware of the shock GEORGE has had. TOM spots a taxi and soon moves forward out of shot.

BATEMAN: As places go these days, it takes a lot of beating. I didn't know it was a haunt of yours. Go there much?

GEORGE (dithering): Er. . . er, what did you say?

BATEMAN (surprised): Rinaldi's.

GEORGE (trying to pull himself together): Oh yes—yes, I know it well. My favourite restaurant.

BATEMAN gives GEORGE a puzzled look and then looks off left.

34. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
GROUP SHOT. Taxi pulling up at curb. TOM immediately opens the door. As he does so, CUT on action.

35. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)
CAMERA shooting from inside the cab on to BATEMAN and GEORGE. BATEMAN gestures to GEORGE to precede him.

BATEMAN: After you.

GEORGE: No, I—I think on second thoughts I'll walk. I don't really get enough exercise.

BATEMAN: Sure? Well, I'll wait till I hear from you.

He moves forward to the cab, is about to get inside when he fumbles for change, brings out a bob and hands it to TOM through the open window of the door which TOM is holding open for him.

36. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)

CLOSE SHOT of GEORGE. As, off scene, he hears TOM say: "Thank you, sir", he reacts as though he has received a sharp blow in the mid-section. He hears the door slam, does his poor best to squeeze a faint smile on to his face as the taxi drives off, off screen. TOM steps back on to the pavement and just into picture, so that he is a little in front of GEORGE. GEORGE takes a step forward as he speaks his line. The CAMERA DOLLIES BACK to hold both.

GEORGE: What the devil do you mean by this?

TOM (his arms folded in front of him, looks straight ahead, like a sentry on duty): You told me to get myself a job. Well, I took your advice.

GEORGE (facing Tom, and in profile to camera): It was a shameful thing to do.

Between their two heads, a BOWLER-HATTED FIGURE is seen walking down the steps towards them.

TOM: What's shameful about being a doorman? It's a perfectly respectable occupation. But, if you'll oblige me with a couple of hundred quid, I don't mind, for the honour of the family. . .

GEORGE: I won't do it.

TOM, with great patience, as though dealing with a spoilt child, turns with a sigh to look at GEORGE. Then he speaks with heavy emphasis. We hear his remark off screen over the next shot.

37. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)

CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of old BOWLER-HATTED MEMBER. He is walking to CAMERA and suddenly stops as though struck dead by what he has heard.

TOM (off): Now, look George, you can't have it both ways.

The OLD MEMBER coughs ostentatiously and enquiringly.

38. EXT. WEST END CLUB. DAY. (LOC.)

REVERSE TIGHT TWO SHOT, from the OLD MEMBER'S angle, of TOM and GEORGE. GEORGE reacts guiltily to the OLD MEMBER and, in a hurried whisper, says . . .

GEORGE: Come to the office.

He exits left and TOM turns towards the OLD MEMBER, looking off right.

TOM (saluting): Taxi, sir?

*OLD MEMBER (off): Yes, and in the future see to it that you address all members in that fashion.

TOM (saluting again): Yes, sir.

He turns away from CAMERA, puts his fingers to his mouth and lets out another piercing whistle.

DISSOLVE TO:

39. INSERT.

Signature being written of GEORGE RAMSAY on cheque.

40. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of GEORGE (from TOM'S eyeline). GEORGE blots cheque and tears it out of his book. Handing it to TOM, he looks up at him.

- GEORGE: It is to be clearly understood that you find something suitable to your station in life.
TOM (off) (his hand taking the cheque): You are a snob, aren't you George?
41. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.
CLOSE SHOT of TOM. He is sitting on the corner of the desk. He gets up as he says his line.
TOM: All right, don't worry. I'll confine my activities to the highest possible circles.
- DISSOLVE TO:
42. EXT. ASCOT RACECOURSE. DAY. (STOCK).
A library shot of the field in the Ascot Gold Cup, sweeping round the final bend into the straight. (Superimpose field glass roundlets over the shot.)
43. EXT. ROYAL ENCLOSURE. ASCOT. DAY.
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of TOM, just recognisable in spite of field glasses to his eyes and Ascot grey toppler.
TOM: It's all right, darling—in the bag! Minorca's walking it. Money for jam! She's two lengths ahead, it's a procession! Breeding—that's what counts . . . only class horse in the race.
44. EXT. ROYAL ENCLOSURE. ASCOT. DAY.
INDIVIDUAL CLOSE SHOT of beautiful BRUNETTE. Very calm.
BRUNETTE: What about the one on the rails?
43. (Resumed.)
TOM (still looking through glasses): That's Minorca, you silly.
44. (Resumed.)
BRUNETTE: No, our rails.
- †45. EXT. ROYAL ENCLOSURE. ASCOT. DAY.
THREE SHOT of BRUNETTE, TOM and FAT MAN, who now starts shouting with great excitement.
TOM (taking down glasses): Where . . . oh, my lor' (he changes the eyeline).
TOM is now shouting against the little FAT MAN.
TOM: Come on, my beauty, stay there!
FAT MAN: What price Beamish Boy! Beamish Boy's got it! Beamish is walking it! RIDE HIM JOHNNY!
TOM (anxious): Get up there, Minorca—get . . . up!
FAT MAN: Beamish Boy wins—lovely work Johnny boy, they can't touch you at two and a half miles!
46. EXT. ROYAL ENCLOSURE. ASCOT. DAY.
INDIVIDUAL of FAT MAN. He turns to TOM and smiles in a superior way.
FAT MAN: There's class for you, sir.
47. EXT. ROYAL ENCLOSURE. ASCOT. DAY.
INDIVIDUAL of TOM. He gives the little FAT MAN a sour look, tears up his bookmaker's card, looks at the BRUNETTE and shrugs his shoulders as the bits of his card are thrown into the air.
- DISSOLVE TO:
48. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CAMERA shooting over bar, glasses in foreground. GEORGE and BATEMAN are approaching the bar.
GEORGE: Of course, that's another great advantage about the place . . . the train service is excellent. Now, what are you going to have?
(At this moment the back of a white-coated figure walks into shot and we notice GEORGE'S startled reaction.)
49. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of TOM. He smiles ingratiatingly.
TOM: Good evening, gentlemen.
48. (Resumed.)
BATEMAN: New chap, this.
GEORGE (thoroughly shaken): Yes, yes I think he is . . . Er, what'll you have?
BATEMAN: Pink gin for me.
49. (Resumed.)
TOM: What can I get you, sir?
50. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE INDIVIDUAL SHOT of GEORGE. He is scowling at TOM.
GEORGE: Two pink gins.
49. (Resumed.)
TOM (most deferential and courteous): Two pink gins, large?
48. (Resumed.)
GEORGE has no alternative but to nod angrily. TOM turns into CAMERA and exits from shot, leaving GEORGE looking after him, puzzled.
BATEMAN: His face seems very familiar.
GEORGE (wretchedly): It does.
BATEMAN (leaning over the bar and addressing Tom): What's your name?
TOM (off): Tom, sir.
GEORGE winces.
BATEMAN: You ever served me before anywhere?
51. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of TOM. He turns to BATEMAN, with glass in hand.
TOM: I think I've seen you, sir. Don't you sometimes go to the Merry Hell Club?
52. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of BATEMAN reacting as though stung by a wasp.
BATEMAN: I do not.
At this moment we hear off screen BATEMAN'S name being paged. As he turns towards boy shouting from door. . . .
CUT TO:
48. (Resumed.)
TWO SHOT of GEORGE and BATEMAN at the bar.
BATEMAN (reacting to pageboy, climbs off his stool and exits shot): Ah, that'll be Margaret. All right boy.
GEORGE (leaning forward): You double-crossing cad.
53. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of TOM from GEORGE'S eyeline. He finishes pouring a double measure of gin into a glass and then turns and looks at GEORGE.
TOM: Not at all, I assured you I'd mix only with the smartest people.
54. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE SHOT of GEORGE, from TOM'S eyeline.
GEORGE: Well, it's not going to work again. I'm very fond of this place, but sooner than be blackmailed any more, I'll cut it right out of my life.
55. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
SHOT over GEORGE'S shoulder, of TOM bringing drinks to bar.
TOM (smiling): That'll be eight shillings, sir, if you please.
56. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
GROUP SHOT, from behind the bar. TOM, back to CAMERA, left foreground. In background, BATEMAN and WIFE are seen walking through door and up to bar. GEORGE slaps down a pound note. TOM turns, walks to camera out of shot. GEORGE reacts to BATEMAN'S remark as he approaches and climbs off his stool.
BATEMAN: Here we are, my dear, let me introduce Mr. Ramsay.
GEORGE (taking a step or two down stage): How do you do, Mrs. Bateman.
MRS. BATEMAN: Stephen has often spoken of you.
GEORGE (smiling politely): Well, I hope?
BATEMAN: You wait till we start doing business together. There is a ripple of well-mannered laughter.
MRS. BATEMAN: So you're thinking of selling your house.
GEORGE: Yes, it's going to be rather a wrench, but . . .
TOM (walking back into shot and addressing George): Your change, sir.
GEORGE (To Batemans): Excuse me.
He moves back to the bar as TOM puts down a ten-shilling note and a florin. GEORGE picks up the note and the florin, hesitates, then reluctantly pushes the coin across the bar.
57. INT. RINALDI'S COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.
CLOSE INDIVIDUAL of TOM. He smiles, gives a little bow, and picks up the coin.
TOM (delighted with his tip): Thank you, sir.
- DISSOLVE TO:
58. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.
WIDE ANGLE TWO SHOT, windows in background. GEORGE and BATEMAN right and left of screen, are leaning over desk peering at photographs. GEORGE'S chair

is moved out of the way, but just in shot.

GEORGE: My father had this room added on just after the turn of the century.

From below, outside the window, a loud whistling starts, followed almost immediately by the top of a ladder, which waves about for a bit and then comes to rest as it is leant above the window. The two at the desk react to the ladder, but take no immediate notice of it.

BATEMAN: Is it big enough for a billiard table?

GEORGE: Yes, that was the reason. Of course, billiards was all the rage about that time.

The whistling becomes annoyingly loud. GEORGE reacts again and, as he starts to walk towards the window, CUT to reverse.

59. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

REVERSE TWO SHOT. CAMERA from window. GEORGE walks towards CAMERA, turning to look at BATEMAN as he makes his first remark.

GEORGE: I don't play the game myself, so. . .

BATEMAN: Oh, I like billiards.

GEORGE (pleased): Well, then.

He is now in foreground and, as he turns towards the window, he looks stern.

GEORGE: Hey, you outside there, stop that . . . filthy . . .

60. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE INDIVIDUAL SHOT. TOM'S head and shoulders appearing above window ledge.

GEORGE (off): . . . racket. . . .

TOM: Beg pardon, sir.

59. (Resumed.)

GEORGE, rooted to the same spot, has his eyes closed in hopeless resignation. Then he looks at TOM and, on a minor note, says:

GEORGE: Could you do your job more quietly?

60. (Resumed.)

CLOSE INDIVIDUAL SHOT of TOM smiling. He has a cloth cap perched rakishly over one ear, and wears blue dungarees.

TOM: Sure, sorry guv.

61. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of GEORGE turning to BATEMAN. TOM in the background. GEORGE looks extremely worried, after glancing at BATEMAN.

62. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of BATEMAN. He is looking at TOM with that 'Where have I seen him before?' expression.

58. (Resumed.)

GEORGE, trying to become master of the situation, advances bracingly to the desk. He leans over and collects the photographs. He hands them to BATEMAN, at the same time placing himself so that he obstructs BATEMAN'S view of TOM.

GEORGE: Look, I tell you what, why don't you take these away with you and sort of get a mental picture of the layout.

BATEMAN (surprised): Yes, all right, I suppose you are rather busy.

He looks past GEORGE, or tries to, but he has to take a side step to get a good look at TOM. He is thwarted in this as GEORGE bends over the desk to get a cigarette out of a silver box. He offers this to BATEMAN, as he changes his position to obstruct the view once more.

BATEMAN: No thanks, Ramsay, not now.

GEORGE (handing Bateman the photographs): Any time you'd like to come back and see the house.

BATEMAN (taking the hint and moving towards the door. As he does so, the CAMERA TRACKS with him, left. George continues to block beautifully): Thanks, I'll give you a ring.

They take two or three steps towards the door and then BATEMAN stops and returns quickly to the desk as he says. . .

BATEMAN: Oh, my hat.

(Like a well-drilled recruit, GEORGE turns on his heel, soon makes up the lost ground and returns to the desk . . . CAMERA RE-TRACKING . . . and picks up BATEMAN'S hat from behind the notepaper stand.)

GEORGE: Here we are. Well, I'll look forward to hearing from you.

(Once more the CAMERA TRACKS with them to the door. GEORGE almost succeeds in getting rid of BATEMAN but, at the last moment, he peers round GEORGE and addresses a remark to the window cleaner.)

BATEMAN: Are you a Wimbledon window cleaner?

63. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT of TOM. We see him through the frosted window pane that he has been breathing upon for an extra fine polish. He opens the window wider for a clearer view of the room.

TOM: Elephant and Castle's me regular beat, sir. Been promoted to-day.

64. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE TWO SHOT of BATEMAN and GEORGE at the door, from TOM'S eyeline.

BATEMAN: Hm, very odd . . . well, so long Ramsay.

BATEMAN disappears through the door and GEORGE gives an obvious sigh of relief. But he is not left in peace very long.

63. (Resumed.)

TOM (breathing again on the window and polishing most conscientiously): You're surely not selling Chartfield?

65. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

MEDIUM SHOT of GEORGE, from TOM'S eyeline. He paces angrily towards his desk.

GEORGE: Mind your own business.

63. (Resumed.)

TOM: As you wish (scratches window pane with his little finger, then wets index finger with spit and again scratches with little finger). You know, it's rather a pleasant business, this. Not very aristocratic, of course, but healthy, invigorating.

65. (Resumed.)

GEORGE: This is not going to do you the slightest bit of good. You've had all you'll ever get out of me.

63. (Resumed.)

TOM: Don't tell me you're hard up, George.

65. (Resumed.)

GEORGE (at first ignoring the remark, then he turns to look at TOM. He is unable to conceal a note of anxiety in his voice): Don't you start spreading rumours like that about me.

63. (Resumed.)

TOM (quick to take advantage): Well, why are you selling Chartfield, I thought you loved the place?

65. (Resumed.)

GEORGE (still pacing in front of his desk): It's got nothing whatever to do with . . . (he leans back against the desk). On second thoughts, I will tell you, then, perhaps, you'll leave me alone in future.

63. (Resumed.)

TOM (pushing the window open still further and stepping into the room): This is all most intriguing.

As he advances into the room, we CUT round to REVERSE.

65. (Resumed.)

TOM saunters up to him, back to CAMERA, and helps himself to a cigarette from GEORGE'S box. GEORGE swivels and changes his eyeline as TOM leans over the desk.

GEORGE: It so happens that John Blair has decided to retire this year. He has given me a chance to acquire full control of the firm and I have agreed to buy him out.

He just manages to control his annoyance as TOM helps himself to a cigarette. TOM is now CAMERA LEFT and having DOLLIED in with TOM, we are in TIGHT TWO SHOT. TOM lights up and blows out a cloud of smoke with great satisfaction.

GEORGE (continuing): I need all the money I can raise. I shouldn't be selling Chartfield if I had any more to waste on you. Now do you understand?

They look at each other for a second or two. Then TOM, as though looking at a germ through a microscope, says. . .

TOM: You're an extraordinary chap, George.

He takes a step nearer CAMERA and continues his lines without looking at GEORGE.

(continued on page 140)

VINCENTE MINNELLI

Simon
Harcourt-Smith

Right: The Nicholas Brothers and Gene Kelly in a dance sequence from "The Pirate". Below: Minnelli on the set of "Ziegfeld Follies", talking to Judy Garland, at that time his wife.



MUSICAL COMEDY was perhaps the first branch of the entertainment industry really to exploit the possibilities of talking pictures. Artists like René Clair experimented with song and dance, in *Sous les Toits de Paris* and the films immediately following it; the first talking picture was, after all, *The Jazz Singer*—and then quickly on, in Hollywood, to *The Broadway Melody*, *King of Jazz*, *Whoopie*. The "talkies" made it suddenly possible to put into cinemas a type of film never before seen there—the all-dancing, all-screaming epic, sometimes all-swimming too, where great glutinous ropes of rhythm pulled the chorus from diamonds into lotuses, from stripes into stars.

Then, as the world got used to sound, the musical comedy started to go out of fashion, save perhaps for the Astaire pictures, and the "vehicles" for comedians like Eddie Cantor and the Marx Brothers, which were only incidentally musicals. Where the formula survived, its conventions tended to ossify, it would adopt the hangdog expedient of a "back-stage" story, started by *42nd Street*; and though the musical continued to be a profitable source of revenue for Hollywood (European experiments in this form have rarely been commercial successes), few people interested in the cinema would give more than a shiver to the thought of them.

In the last decade, however, we have gradually come to change our attitude. Already, before the war, into such films as *On Your Toes* (which employed Balanchine as choreographer) some glimmerings of wit and taste had been tentatively infused. It is not, however, unfair to say that the work of Vincente Minnelli has, since 1942, entirely altered the status and the possibilities of the musical film.

Minnelli apparently comes of a French mother and an Italian father who ran a travelling tent theatre in the Middle

West. When the movies drove tent shows out of business, the young Minnelli went to work as a sign-painter, eventually getting a post as set and costume designer with a theatre chain that rejoiced in the fairy-tale name of Balaban and Katz. His latent talent drew him eventually to New York; there, in course of time, he became stage director at the Rockefeller Centre Music Hall.

This was in the mid-thirties. Like many at that time, Minnelli felt the enchantments of surrealism; and into an edition of the "Ziegfeld Follies" he introduced a surrealist ballet. His best work has more or less pivoted upon surrealism and the ballet ever since.

There was an abortive flirtation with Hollywood in 1937, when Minnelli went for a moment under contract to Paramount. But it was only three years later that he found his true home in the cinema, and his erratic and sophisticated spirit was taken to the most improbable of bosoms, that of M.G.M. The first credit for this must undoubtedly go to Arthur Freed, for many years a senior producer at M.G.M. and a specialist in musicals. (He has produced all Minnelli's films, and others such as *Summer Holiday* and *On the Town*.) Freed brought Minnelli to Hollywood and gave him, so to speak, the run of the studio; he was allowed, for two years, to look and learn. It may be hard to imagine how Minnelli found a niche for himself, but Minnelli approximates to no ordinary rule of Hollywood. For nine years now he has turned out for his employers a series of musical pictures (with a few straight ones interposed between) which have borne little likeness to anything else that M.G.M. or any other Hollywood studio turns out. They have not always made a great deal of money; they often demand an audience of intelligence; since *Meet Me in St. Louis* they have contained few "American" elements,



Judy Garland in "Meet Me in St. Louis"

and then generally to mock at them; their heroes are thieves, pirates or—most disreputable of all—unsuccessful painters; never once has Minnelli been driven, so far, to use a "back-stage" story. His spirit does not seem to have been crushed by the machine; there are no signs of M.G.M. discarding him; on the contrary, he is soon to embark on a musical version of *Huckleberry Finn* (with Gene Kelly and Danny Kaye).

In his first film, *Cabin in the Sky* (1942), signs of a vigorous, original and already skilful talent were immediately apparent. It was not, perhaps, quite suited to a simple negro fable. As a whole the picture may suffer from somewhat of the same kind of rather embarrassing goodness as, for one member

of the public at least, mars de Sica's new *Miracolo a Milano*; here, too, Minnelli has not yet fought entirely free of the stage, particularly in the title number. Yet the church service in the first reel, and Rochester's duet, "Consequences", with Lena Horne, are both superbly done.

Minnelli's next picture, *I Dood It*, known in this country as *By Hook or by Crook*, was a comedy for Red Skelton, with occasional numbers by Eleanor Powell and Lena Horne, and perhaps remarkable for little except a slight flirtation with surrealism—a pleasure for which he had vainly hoped, but been obliged to renounce, in *Cabin in the Sky*. In 1944, however, he really came into his own, with *Meet Me in St. Louis*—perhaps one of the most perfect music films ever made. Its style is deliberately innocent, *bauerkunst*; the story, such as it is, belongs to the wide-eyed world of the Christmas Annual; yet within his self-imposed limits, and the comparatively unpromising background of St. Louis in 1904, Minnelli has contrived a real work of imagination. The family album with which the film begins and ends determines the attractively nostalgic flavour. Judy Garland's dance with little Margaret O'Brien, and the child's terrors during Halloween, the attack on the snow-men, the ride on the trolley car, blend fantasy and operette with such airy skill as almost to provide a new pattern for the musical of the future. Minnelli himself has not since been so successful with the human elements of his stories.

Shortly after this film, Minnelli appears to have found a technical association of the utmost importance. His art director for *Meet Me in St. Louis* was Lemuel Ayers, who had designed the original sets for the New York production of *Oklahoma*. In the port-wine-and-mahogany tradition of a half century ago, over which the Americans, with their appallingly acute sense of a lacking past, have already begun to sentimentalise, Lemuel Ayers performed a pleasant, respectable task. But the visual enchantment, the particular elegance for which Minnelli's work is now famous, becomes remarkable only with his *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945), the first film in which Jack Martin Smith appears on the credits (with Cedric Gibbons) as Minnelli's art director. Here at last Minnelli seems to have found a collaborator whose tastes were perfectly attuned to his own. The consequences of the partnership have been singular, to say the least. The two may have made mistakes; their handling of Technicolor (Minnelli has had no fixed collaboration with a cameraman) has not always been beyond reproach; Martin Smith's detail, particularly in *The Pirate*, is sometimes slipshod and "stagey" to an irritating degree. Nevertheless, their collaboration possesses grace and style, qualities rare in the cinema these days; and from the M.G.M. studios there have emerged since the war, thanks to Minnelli and Martin Smith, and the dance directors and others with whom they have collaborated, a series of films so elegant and imaginative in conception that we can compare them only, from this point of view, with Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête*.

The most perfectly conceived and integrated of these was perhaps *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945). Minnelli had already shown in a charming "straight" film that intervened, *Under the Clock*, that he possesses when he cares a fine sense of the unities; in his musicals, however, though his stories are far less inane than most of their kind, they seem to hinder and embarrass him. *Ziegfeld Follies*, on the other hand, enjoys the



This group from "Meet Me in St. Louis", with Lucile Bremer and Margaret O'Brien, shows Minnelli's decorative flair

unique advantage of possessing no story at all, of being unashamedly a revue, with not the faintest pretence at a connecting link between the numbers. The result is in my view completely successful—though inevitably, as in any revue, one or two numbers fall below the general level—witty, gay, and of an elegance that remains quite untarnished.

Certain sketches have haunted my mind all this time, and turn out, when one sees the film again, as I did recently, to be even better than one's memory of them. The drinking song from *Traviata*, for instance, where scores and scores of crystal chandeliers gleam through gauze curtains, while women revolve in costumes that seem to catch the very breath of the 1830's; Lucille Ball in her ballet of cats, against a strange background of black and "shocking" pink, in the introductory "Bring on those Wonderful Girls", summoning all the extravagance of the original Ziegfeld; the white and scarlet semi-surrealist ballet that Astaire and Lucile Bremer dance to "This Heart of Mine"; above all, the performance of Judy Garland (to whom Minnelli was at that time married) in the enchanting number by Kay Thompson which shows a great film star's antics as she interviews the "Fourth Estate". All this is fantasy, beauty, fun, in a formula which until then the cinema had not seen. If Minnelli had never made another picture, his *Ziegfeld Follies* would, I hold, have still entitled him to a very respectable place in the history of the film.

Since then, however, he has made three musical films—*Yolanda and the Thief*, *The Pirate*, and now *An American in Paris*, one rather unfortunate straight picture, *Madame Bovary*, with Jennifer Jones in the title role, and a couple of expert, trivial domestic comedies, *Father of the Bride* and *Father's Little Dividend*. Even *Madame Bovary*, for all its faults, possessed, we must concede, moments of quality—Emma brooding in her jumbled outhouse as a young girl, and most of all, the moment at the ball when life suddenly becomes everything she had dreamed. The film, it will be remembered, had slowed down its tempo for the preceding half reel; suddenly Emma takes fire; waltz and admirers swirl in delicious confusion around her; she is the belle of the ball: this is how life should go.

There is something symptomatic of Minnelli himself in this episode. He also needs the dance, the moment of enchantment. He does what he can with stories for which he obviously can feel no sympathy—and in *Madame Bovary*, of course, it is usually not enough. (Not even Bemelmans in *Yolanda and the Thief* was able to give him a subject in which either he or we could believe.) Then all at once the excuse comes for a dance, more often than not in a dream, but sometimes in a setting of crazy realism, a fiesta or a fair. It is important to note the dance directors with whom he has collaborated: Charles Walters (who has since become a director of musicals himself, with *Easter Parade* and others) on *Meet Me in St. Louis*; Robert Alton on the Astaire numbers in *Ziegfeld Follies* and, with Gene Kelly, on *The Pirate*; Eugene Loring, who choreographed *Yolanda and the Thief* and the *Traviata* sequence in *Ziegfeld Follies*; and Gene Kelly on *An American in Paris*. Minnelli's musicals are not in the prevalent American "lyric theatre" tradition, with its folk element and fondness for the past; he has moved away from this since *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The "lyric theatre" tradition, coming from *Oklahoma* on the stage, can be seen in the cinema in Gene Kelly's *On the Town*.

The dream ballet, choreographed by Eugene Loring, a former pupil of Balanchine, in "Yolanda and the Thief". Fred Astaire



The "Be a Clown" number at the end of "The Pirate". Gene Kelly and Judy Garland

In Minnelli's collaborations with Gene Kelly, the two talents are not always in harmony, which probably accounts for the unevenness of *The Pirate* and *An American in Paris*. The particular sophistication and fantasy of the ballets created with Robert Alton and Eugene Loring seem on the whole to have suited him best.

Then the whole quality of his direction alters: he throws off his manner of jaded elegance, and attacks the screen with a vigour, a haunting, sweeping imagination that seems to burst right out of the theatre and add new possibilities to the art of the cinema. Take, for instance, the ballet danced by Astaire



Ziegfeld



and Lucile Bremer on serpentine lines of black and white in *Yolanda and the Thief*. Take, too, the dream ballet in *The Pirate*, and that which lifts *An American in Paris* into the realms of genuine excitement. One may deplore certain mannerisms in this last ballet which seem inseparable from modern American choreography—the abominable habit, for



Scenes from *Ziegfeld Follies*. Top: Fred Astaire in "Limehouse Lament" sequence. Top right: Judy Garland parodies the "Lady Gives an Interview" sequence. Bottom: Fred Astaire in "The Babbitt" sequence. Bottom right: Judy Garland in "The Babbitt" sequence. Decors by Jack Giblin.



Follies



...llies. Centre, Astaire and
...d the Bromide". Top left,
...e film star in "The Great
...v". Below, left, the "La
...right, Lucile Bremer and
...use Blues". Below, right,
...n Lucile Bremer and Fred
...Martin Smith and Cedric
...bons



instance, of making ballerinas walk more than dance upon their points—but the general effect, with its evocations of Toulouse-Lautrec and of Douanier Rousseau, is brilliantly beautiful, a new contribution to our pleasure. A few years ago, ballet seemed unfilmable. As much, I think, as *The Red Shoes*, Minnelli has shown us how wrong we were.





Two scenes from "A Place in the Sun." Left, Alice (Shelley Winters) visits the doctor after discovering she is pregnant. Right, Montgomery Clift as George Eastman

The Current Cinema

A PLACE IN THE SUN

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

"Is Clyde Griffiths guilty or not guilty—in your treatment?" was the first question from the head of Paramount, B. P. Schulberg.

"Not guilty", was our reply.

"But then your script is a monstrous challenge to American society. . . . We would prefer a simple whodunit about a murder . . ."

" . . . and about the love of a boy and a girl", someone added with a sigh.

UP TO THE TIME of making *A Place in the Sun*, the directors of Paramount must surely have wondered whether their purchase of the screen rights of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* was worth it. They tried and shelved the project in the above interview with Eisenstein. In the next five years several Paramount writers, including D. W. Griffith and Lubitsch, toyed with the idea of adapting it, but it wasn't till 1931 that it reached the screen: the subject was entrusted to von Sternberg who filmed it as a detective story (and, incidentally, landed Paramount in a law-suit with Dreiser). Twenty years later, the final lone voice at Eisenstein's script conference was at last heard. The subject was re-made by George Stevens and this time there has been no mistake: *A Place in the Sun* presents no challenge to American society and is very much "about the love of a boy and a girl".

It is not surprising that Dreiser's novel should have appealed to so many directors, nor that it should have given rise to controversial scripts. The story's superb dramatic impasse provides immediately acceptable film material. But the overtones of Dreiser's novel—its analysis of the American social scene, its detached acceptance of Clyde's crime as (in Mencken's phrase) "a sort of biological accident"—were bound to prove commercial obstacles. The present version removes the obstacles by largely omitting the original's social comments.

The hero of *An American Tragedy* (the film gives him a new name, George Eastman) is the son of a couple of fanatical bible-bashing street-preachers who run a dingy,

ineffectual mission. Disgusted by the sham conversions and revolting against his stark puritanical upbringing, George runs away from home. Memories of his childhood and contacts with the realities of American life soon develop in him an overwhelming desire for wealth and respectability. A chance meeting with a rich uncle gets him a job at the uncle's large factory and a promise of the quick promotion which is due to an Eastman; a tantalising first glimpse of society intensifies his ambition. During his apprenticeship days in the packing station, George meets a factory girl, Alice, who is dazzled by his name and allows herself to be seduced. George's natural charm makes him an acceptable guest at his relatives' house where he meets and falls in love with Angela, a beautiful, spoilt, manufacturer's daughter. His immediate plan to jettison Alice in favour of a more promising marriage is, however, frustrated when Alice tells him that she is pregnant. He tries and fails to find an abortionist for her and, seeing his ambitions of social success threatened, conceives a plan to kill her. He takes Alice rowing on a deserted mountain lake but finds, when it comes to the point, that he cannot go through with the murder. When, however, Alice accidentally capsizes the boat, he seizes his chance and leaves her to drown. He is caught, brought to trial and sentenced to the electric chair. At the end of the novel, George comes to accept that in the eyes of God his desire to kill makes him as guilty as if he had actually committed the murder and Dreiser leaves him struggling helplessly on the edge of some new, again mystical faith.

The script of *A Place in the Sun* transposes the action into the present without making a consistent adjustment for the change in social conventions: on the one hand, George is received with almost feudal condescension on his first arrival at the relatives' house; on the other, once he has fallen in love with Angela, his acceptance by the smart set (which in the novel remains a dream rather than a possible reality) is assumed to be complete. The point of George's dilemma is further weakened by the script's omission of the childhood scenes; his background is ingeniously but inadequately

Scenes from "Miss Julie". Right, Anita Bjork as Miss Julie. Below, left, Jean and Julie as children, in one of the flashbacks; below, right, Jean and Julie in the present, on Midsummer Eve.



sketched in two minor asides. Harry Brown's and Michael Wilson's script also completely reorientates the story's climax. When George is alone in his cell awaiting execution, Angela comes to him to declare her undying love. This makes, in effect, the precise opposite of Dreiser's point. In the novel, Angela refuses to see George from the moment he is accused; the suspicion of guilt and the revelation of his affair with a working girl are as socially undesirable as the murder itself. By being brought to trial George has merely re-established his old position; the social pattern remains undisturbed. The film tears down this barrier, implying that, but for a silly mistake, George might well have found a place in the sun.

The film, in other words, does not attempt to chronicle an American tragedy at all. It is made as a love story and asks to be assessed on its own level. As such, George Stevens' treatment gives it one great advantage over the original. For Dreiser's stodgy, repetitious, finally unilluminating prose,

he substitutes a strikingly dramatic, often highly original visual style. The surface quality of his narrative is in every way more acceptable.

It is surprising to find a director whose previous films had revealed an essentially unambitious technical talent, suddenly experimenting with and bringing off daring effects of continuity. Long, intimate love scenes between George and Alice are played exclusively in huge close-up. Other passages use a great number of lingering dissolves, often obscuring the time sequence of events and establishing an emotional atmosphere through disconnected images. The scene of the murder on the lake develops in a series of slow, isolated impressions taken in different settings at different times of day and evening, in which the changing quality of the images rather than any continuous dramatic development creates the powerful effect of hysteria: it is a most daringly conceived piece of cinema.

It is curious (it seems almost accidental) that the final





"The River". Above, the party: Thomas Breen and Adrienne Corri. Below, Rumer Godden and Jean Renoir. Right, the river.

effect of this highly mannered style should be similar to that of Dreiser's blunt, wasteful prose. The fatalism which seeps through the novel, and is achieved by the constant barrage of Dreiser's pessimistic asides, is captured in the film by more economical means. The long, hopeless quest for an abortionist (which covers several chapters in the novel) is conveyed in one brief shot of the couple leaving a dingy chemist's shop and a further tortuous, brilliantly played scene between Alice and a kindly but unhelpful doctor. Similarly, the slow decay in the relationship between Alice and George is crystallised in one daringly staged scene played for the most part in one long take, in which the two characters are back to camera and only the drab emptiness of a lodging house room is made to support the agonising bitterness of the dialogue.

So elliptical an approach to characterisation, if it is not to lead to obscurity, requires a high standard of acting. Shelley Winters plays Alice with a natural reserve and unaffected directness that gives her final scenes a most memorable pathos, while Elizabeth Taylor, perfectly cast, gives Angela just the right mixture of ritzy irresponsibility

and extravagant adolescent passion. But it is Montgomery Clift's performance to which the film owes the greatest debt: his playing of George as a weak, rather blunt, quietly charming drifter, if it pleads too much sympathy for Dreiser's novel, seems to be precisely what was required of him by the script.

MISS JULIE

Reviewed by Derick Grigs

FROM THEIR ROMANTIC OBSESSION with the theme of blighted youth, Alf Sjöberg and Ingmar Bergman seem to be the Carné and Prevert of Scandinavia. One can deduce from the way Bergman, the writer of *Frenzy* and *Iris*, fumbled the direction of his own *Hamnstad* that the partnership's success was due mainly to Sjöberg, who is the leading Swedish film and stage director. Finding other collaborators for his most ambitious film, Sjöberg has now adapted *Miss Julie*, one of Strindberg's essays in intellectual Grand Guignol.

The setting of *Miss Julie* is a Swedish country house in



the 'eighties. It is midsummer eve, and in the absence of the count, their master, the servants abandon themselves to the traditional orgy until dawn. The atmosphere at once enthralled and sickens Julie, the count's daughter, warped early in life by the masquerade of boyhood into which her disappointed parents forced her. Bored and piqued after a broken engagement, she flirts recklessly with the cook's lover, her father's valet. This Jean is an avid climber, who desires Julie mainly as a symbol of the social heights he has yet to scale. In fear of being caught together after their night-long conversation, they flee to the valet's room, and there he seduces her. To Jean, the fall of his idol is as much a disappointment as a triumph, and Julie realises that she has outlawed herself for the sake of a squalid creature who cares nothing for her. She takes the only way out she can see—what Strindberg calls "the nobleman's hara-kiri".

Anxious not to break the illusion with intervals, Strindberg instead interrupts the action with monologues, mime and dance, all of which are obvious cues for those digressions in time and space which the cinema can provide. The few minutes in which Jean and Julie exchange life-stories are expanded into flashbacks occupying a good third of the film. The adaptors seek not merely to translate stage dialogue into film action, which they do brilliantly, but to emphasise the background that has shaped the pair, and here they are less successful. To give a simultaneous, stereoscopic view of cause and effect, Sjöberg juggles ingeniously with time and place. During Julie's monologue we see, behind her head, herself as a baby in her mother's arms. Later, the camera pans from a mirror reflecting the child in boy's clothes to the tormented face of the adult: this mirror is used consistently for temporal gear-changing of this kind. There are constant reminders that we are watching the death-agonies of a great family: portraits of ancestors gaze down on their quarrelling descendants, and, rescued from the fire started by the half-mad countess, pass by in mournful and ironic procession. It is her dead mother's picture that mockingly regards the suicide's body in the last shot.

This division of the film into layers, however, proves fatal to unity of direction. Sjöberg is best where he sticks most closely to the play. He magically evokes the atmosphere of midsummer eve, which, with its heat, music and the dark scuffling of tipsy lovers, binds this ill-assorted couple in an erotic spell; but in the flashbacks he indulges his taste for melodrama, employing theatrical poses and low-angle shots which make everything look larger than life. Inventive throughout in his angles, Sjöberg resembles at some points Reed and Kazan, also trained in the theatre, in a strong sense of effective grouping and business. He is a master architect of virtuoso sequences, in some of which Dag Wren's fine score is so vital that they might be called concertos for camera; the seduction scene, in particular, is a *tour de force* of violent and explicit symbolism. Under the hard Scandinavian sun, the photography (by Goran Strindberg, the author's grandson) ranges voluptuously from velvety black to the mellow sheen of old silver.

The acting of the principals is eloquent, though in one or two minor parts Sjöberg, as before, fails in his efforts with the stolid Nordic face. The waxen intensity of Anita Björk is perfectly suited to the "man-hating half-woman" of Strindberg's preface, proud, humourless, and neurotically impulsive. Alf Palme expresses the conflict of ambition and servility in the conceited lout, "polished without and coarse within", described by his creator, though his range is too limited for the rage and ecstasy of his final scene. The cook (Märta Dorff) has some vivid moments of bovine admiration for her formidably plain reflection, a telling contrast with the sick beauty of her rival.

Somehow, in spite of all the care and taste expended on Julie's story, it does not touch one as it should. The script-writers were unwise to spend so much time digging up the past of Strindberg's people, without his insight into character.

Dramatic and beautiful as they often are, these digressions seem less real than the events of midsummer eve; they slacken the tension and detach the spectator from Julie's suffering. The play sticks brutally to the point; it would take all the savagery of a Clouzot to film the last scene as it stands.

THE RIVER

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

THE CAREER OF JEAN RENOIR has often seemed an enigma. His reputation is, justly, high, but so few of his films have really satisfied. Of the pre-war French films, only the bitter tragedy *La Règle du Jeu*, and the beautiful *Partie de Campagne*, can be called unqualified successes. Much of *La Grande Illusion* still looks impressive, but the film itself is incomplete. Many of the others have wonderful moments, but as a whole they are disappointingly untidy, episodic, even garbled: yet there is hardly one which does not suggest a great talent. In America Renoir seemed to acquire more technical discipline, sometimes wasted on unworthy subjects, but in *Swamp Water* (finished by another director) and, more especially, *The Southerner*, his observation of the South had power and atmosphere. He is said to dislike the streamlined production methods of Hollywood, and it is certainly true that, more polished and better shaped though *The Southerner* may be, one would still exchange it for *Les Bas Fonds* or *La Bête Humaine*. His new film, besides, makes it clear that we should accept Renoir for what he is—an imperfectionist, with talent great enough to contain the kind of faults that few directors today would dare to commit.

The River, which Renoir shot in India, in Technicolor, from a novel by Rumer Godden, and with a largely unfamiliar cast, has been acquired for release in this country by United Artists. It shows Renoir's talent in full flower, the film of a humanist and a poet, and in its tender intuition, affectionate understanding, follows the line of his most memorable work. As in his best American films he absorbed and reflected a new locale, so here—with more leisure, more freedom—he creates, with evident fascination, an Indian background. Nearly all the main characters, however, are English, and the film is a gentle, episodic evocation of an English household in a Bengal village on the Ganges. The central figure, and the narrator, is Harriet, a girl of fourteen; on the fringe of adolescent experience when the story opens, she is taken by events to its centre. The mother and father, her young brother and two little sisters, remain in the background. In the foreground are herself, Valerie, a girl of seventeen, and a half-caste girl, all rivals for the affections of a young American who has come to stay in the village. All three girls fall romantically, impermanently in love with the young man, who has lost a leg in the war, and is secretly lonely, uncertain, embittered. Harriet, writing poems in an exercise book, plain and awkward, is mortified by Valerie's beauty, arrogance and success; the half-caste girl, with a more mature understanding, comes closer than the others to Captain John. And Captain John finally goes away again.

The slightness of the story is filled out by the richness of the background, and a constant series of events, some everyday, some important. Playing quoits with Captain John, Valerie humiliates him by causing him to fall and lie helplessly on the ground. The little brother, who spends his days with an Indian boy trying to charm snakes, is stung by one and killed. Dismayed by her first experience of death and love, Harriet takes a skiff out on the river at night, tries to kill herself, is picked up by fishermen and enjoyably consoled by Captain John. And the river, used as a symbol of time, life, the world, flows calmly and broadly on.

It is, deliberately, a westerner's view. Renoir communicates landscapes and customs as a charmed outsider, and reinforces this impression by using the English girl as narrator. A marriage dance ceremony, the colour and excitement of a market, the exquisite landscapes and the ragged beggars, a

firework ritual, a simple act of idolatry, all these are observed with a clear enchantment. Against this background Renoir sets the leisure and the quietness of the English household—as the old waltzes the children play on their gramophone are contrasted with the village music. The drama of the whole film is, in a sense, as alien to its background as the waltz to the Indian music: a nostalgic, retrospective sketch of childhood and adolescence, stemming from a novel that is, basically, of today's ever so sensitive female school, but given a purity of feeling by Renoir's own personality. Its core, perhaps, is contained in the speech of the half-caste girl's white father, when he hears of the little boy's death and muses on the innocence and simplicity of childhood, finding a beauty, even a satisfaction, in the death itself. Both the half-caste girl and her father are new characters, not in the original novel, and they strengthen the central situation.

Not all of this, it must be said, is satisfactorily done. Renoir has made little attempt to shape his material. The film starts confusingly, overburdened by narration, slow to establish any direction or purpose. Its episodes are often carelessly linked together, scenes end with disconcerting abruptness, and one or two sequences—notably the children's party—undoubtedly suffer from untidy direction. Some of the acting is no more than adequate. Patricia Walters (Harriet) and Thomas Breen (Captain John) are perhaps the weakest; the latter in particular has not the charm his part requires. Esmond Knight is peculiarly, though briefly, stilted as the father. The Indian actress, Radha, is charming, and wonderful in the dance sequence; and Adrienne Corri as Valerie shows beauty, force and much personality—though there are traces of inexperience in her acting.

The imperfections are undeniable, and at times really distracting; yet there is something marvellous about a film that can hold and entrance one in spite of them. The final sequences are, fortunately, the most sustained, and with the little boy's open air funeral, and the episodes that follow, *The River* moves to a rare depth and intensity. Previously it has attained this only at certain moments—the beautiful sequence of the dance, of the afternoon siesta, of the fireworks in the garden—and its continuity is most firmly established by Claude Renoir's colour photography, as lovely and expressive as any yet recorded. It ranges from the gaudiness of the market scenes and the opulent dance sequence, to the mysterious blue shades of the river at night and the delicate, pale landscapes.

Memorable alone in a contemporary film, *The River* does not contain one disagreeable character. Instead, one is aware of the sympathy, the wisdom and understanding of a remarkable artist who loves human beings.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

THE 69 MINUTES of John Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage* (M.G.M.) present an awkward critical problem. The film has not been completed as Huston originally conceived it; it was apparently taken out of his hands after front-office discussions, and not simply re-cut but re-shaped in its new version. Important scenes were omitted or transposed from their former context, action sequences were extended and passages of interior emphasis probably altered; what remains may be little more than most of the material Huston originally shot, reshuffled, with a prose commentary (taken from Stephen Crane's novel) added at intervals. Perhaps one should not review the film at all, even though it was press shown. Yet, in its present state, it has had considerable acclaim, above all in America, and many of the appreciations make no reference as to what has happened. To those unaware of its history the film can, it seems, make a notable impact in its own right: and as an experiment it is outstandingly bold.

These comments can only be offered as a matter of record, as tentative notes on a film whose conception one cannot be sure about; though enough remains for a style, an approach, to emerge definitely in certain sequences. The novel, which Crane wrote in 1892 at the age of 21, is a poetically concentrated account of a young recruit in the Union Army of Rappahannock during the Civil War; tired and dazed by the period of drilling and marching, confused by the company of veterans, he finds a sense of panic growing within him, he sees "hideous possibilities" and deserts during a Confederate attack. In the nightmarish hours that follow, he tries to overcome the humiliation of cowardice. By the next day he has found courage; in a new battle "He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man". There is very little exterior action in the novel; the battle scenes are vividly but sparsely described, and the longest sections of the book are composed of the youth's meditations, the conversations of veterans, the youth's encounters (with the tall soldier and the tattered man) after he deserts, and the change in his soul. The method is not realistic. None of the characters is intimately described, all are types rather than individuals, and the writing makes its effect through a surprising and unique combination of almost incantatory prose and highly naturalistic dialogue.

Huston, it is clear, followed the book closely. The most substantial cut in the present version seems to be after the youth has deserted, where his meeting with the tall soldier and the tattered man, and his reaction to these experiences, are so truncated that key-points of his interior development are lost, and his discovery of courage appears almost unmotivated. Allowances must be made for this, and for the fact that the extended battle sequences probably make the film seem to concentrate more on exterior action than Huston intended. All the same, the general impression hardly supports *Time's* claim for "one of the best war films ever made". The visual style, influenced by Brady's photographs, is impressive; there are moments when the horror, the brutality and panic of conflict are intensely conveyed; yet there is little, anywhere, to suggest the essential interior resource that a film of *The Red Badge* must have. One knows from Huston's past films that his limitations as a director are a disinclination to make direct statements, to declare sympathies, and also to penetrate character in depth. He has exciting gifts as a storyteller, and when the emphasis of his material is firstly on action—as in *The Maltese Falcon*, parts of *We Were Strangers* and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, and much of *The Asphalt Jungle*—his films fascinate by their grasp of narrative, surface detail and dramatic tension. But the last three films mentioned are all in some degree unsatisfactory through a failure to approach, at certain points, analytically or intuitively, the deeper human elements involved. Garfield in *We Were Strangers*, Bogart in *Sierra Madre*, Sterling Hayden in *The Asphalt Jungle*, all remain under-developed characters. In *The Red Badge* these human elements are at the base of the film, and they are not allowed to emerge. Skilled though the narrative is, its style looks more suitable for an action film; few of the performances are satisfactory—Audie Murphy as the youth has the right kind of face but not enough power to project the character, Bill Mauldin is miscast as the loud soldier, John Dierkes completely off-key as the tall soldier—and the *stature* of Crane's novel never seems matched. Its passion, its pity and hallucination are narrowed down to a smaller realistic plane, and the treatment stays outside the material, sympathetic though it undoubtedly is.

All this may be unjust; though one cannot help feeling that suggestions at least of a further power, if it existed, would be apparent in the present version of the film. It does not alter the tragedy of what has happened, that we cannot see *The Red Badge of Courage* Huston wanted to make. It would be interesting, too, to know why the present version is considered to have commercial possibilities superior to the original.

ENCORE

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

THE SOMERSET MAUGHAM FILM looks like becoming a yearly event, an annual tribute paid by the cinema to literature and accepted, with suitable courtesies on both sides, by its *doyen*. Procedure for the occasion has now been established, and if the quality of the offering declined with *Trio*, it is on the whole agreeably revived in *Encore*.

It opens with the obligatory curtain raiser, almost identical in spirit with *The Facts of Life* and *The Verger*, in which money is made in defiance of all normal rules, and business pomposity gently derided. Maugham's five page anecdote, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, has been expanded by T. E. B. Clarke; it remains a five-minute joke whose elaborations only delay the predictable punch line, and Pat Jackson does not seem altogether at ease with the particular brand of stylish flippancy. The second story, *Winter Cruise*, has points of contact with *Mr. Knowall*. Miss Reid, the imperturbably cheerful, fatuously self-confident and incessantly talkative tourist, maddens the ship's officers faced with three weeks of her undiluted chatter. They devise a callous trick—romance with a handsome steward—to keep her quiet. The switch of sympathy at this point, the re-assessment of Miss Reid now that she is the victim rather than the victimizer, is managed with typical Maugham finesse. In the story Miss Reid's conversational staying power is indicated only by a few give-away lines ("I'm never bored. That's why, if you won't think me a wee bit conceited to say so, I'm never boring".) Arthur Macrae has filled in the outline with consistently entertaining dialogue, and Kay Walsh, in a part which invites easy caricature, contrives to suggest an Anglicised version of a Helen Hokinson cartoon. The indomitable Miss Reid is adroitly but restrained pin-pointed, and the delicate balance sustained between comedy and farce heightens one's enjoyment of the performance.

If *Winter Cruise* is the most completely successful episode, *Gigolo and Gigolette* is the most ambitious, although subjected to stereotyped handling by Harold French and suffering to some extent from the miscasting of Glynis Johns. She plays with genuine feeling, but the background suggested is that of the hockey team rather than the shabby and dismal poverty which the story demands. The Eric Ambler script, however, adequately realises the core of Maugham's situation: the diver, risking her neck twice a night for a public whose real thrill will come when she breaks it, and fearing that her husband's only interest is the money from the act. The end of the story has been romanticised, but it remains a bitter, tense and theatrically effective anecdote.

Encore brings its episodes more sharply and accurately to a close than did its predecessors and contains less falsification of its author—*Quartet* tacked on happy endings wholesale. It preserves largely intact the qualities which make the stories eminently readable: their highly professional organisation, the concise, civilised tone, the irony which can seem blandly superficial and can provide a genuine comment, the outlook, with an objectivity and range of reference not often found in the cinema. These films are, of course, made to a formula too inelastic to permit much variation in emphasis or in quality. But it is a formula derived from Somerset Maugham himself and one is agreeably conscious that an expert entertainer is at work. To the purist, a film which merely lifts material from one medium and puts it down in another, adding only the decoration of some enjoyable performances, can never be very satisfying. Maugham, however, is admirably suited to the treatment; his machine-tooled stories impose their own style and pattern, they demand literal translation, and this *Encore*, fluently and amiably, gives them.

THE MAGIC BOX

Reviewed by Ernest Lindgren

AMONGST OTHER HARD BLOWS which destiny dealt to William Friese Greene, it neglected to cast the events of his life in a neat dramatic pattern. Success, affluence, a name, all came to him in his youth when the hero of a film drama should still be struggling against adversity; even his work on the film camera was done then. Later, when by all the rules he should have been moving towards a triumph of acclamation, Friese Greene was sinking slowly and unspectacularly into obscurity, poverty and failure, a failure marring his private life as much as his professional one.

Faced with such intractable material, Eric Ambler could have dealt with it (theoretically at least) in three different ways. He could have concentrated on the man himself and given us the tragedy of one (as Chaucer puts it) fallen from high estate; but unfortunately, we do not know enough of Friese Greene's inner life for such a treatment, and what we do know does not suggest tragedy in the dramatic sense. Secondly, he could have concentrated on the background, the invention and growth of the film, for it was this, after all, to which Friese Greene attached his highest hopes and his belief in it has been abundantly vindicated by events, whatever one may say of his own contribution to them. In my view this approach was the only right one, but it would have been attended by great risks and could not have succeeded without a passionate and single-minded enthusiasm for the film as a new instrument of ideas, the kind of enthusiasm which enabled Pudovkin, for example, to wring a triumph for revolution out of the personal defeat and death of his central characters in *Mother*. *The Magic Box*, however, was a tribute paid by the film industry in Festival Year, and in the nature of things passion and all the risks that attend it were as little to be expected from it as from the commissioned tribute of a poet laureate. Eric Ambler, Ronald Neame and John Boulting, therefore, chose the third way open to them and rearranged the events of Friese Greene's life to fall into an acceptable dramatic pattern. We are introduced to him on the morning of his last day; we are taken in two flashbacks, first to the later period of poverty and failure, and then to the earlier period of affluence and success, culminating in the first demonstration of his projector; finally, we return to the scene of his death at a film industry meeting. This rearrangement has been extremely ably done and results in a much smoother narrative than one would expect possible. If the story lacks excitement, it is simply because (unless one brings the invention instead of the man into the foreground) the excitement is not there, and the facts would have to be distorted to create it. Its careful avoidance of conspicuous distortion, however, gives the film distinction. The facts of Friese Greene's life, as far as we know them, appear to be accurately presented; the man himself is not idolised, but on the contrary is presented with a candour which does credit to the makers of the film and shows him not a heroic, but a human figure. He is not even claimed as the sole inventor of cinematography, but simply as one figure taken from a gallery which includes Mary, Edison, Le Prince and others.

There is also a compensating attraction in *The Magic Box* largely independent of the story it has to tell, and that is the cast which enacts it. In 1917 a film called *Masks and Faces* (now in the National Film Library) was produced to raise funds for the Academy of Dramatic Art. Judged to-day as a film it is (unlike *The Magic Box*) an astonishingly inept piece of bad theatre, but the number of outstanding stage people seen in it makes it a fascinating and invaluable record: Shaw, Barrie, Pinero, Irving, Forbes-Robertson, Gladys Cooper, Irene Vanbrugh, Dennis Neilson-Terry, Lillah McCarthy, Sir George Alexander, Matheson Lang, Weedon Grossmith,

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ODD BIRDS IN THE AVIARY *

Some Notes on Poetry and Film

James Broughton

1. POETRY IN A MOVIE WORLD

Modern poetry has been deeply influenced by film.
Modern film has not sufficiently returned the compliment.

Let us be quite clear. To ask for poetry in cinema does not mean that one is asking for verse plays transferred dutifully to celluloid; nor for avant-garde shockers; nor for iambic pentameters tacked on to humdrum footage.

One is certainly not asking for more talk (or fancier): the movies talk too much as it is.

No, one is asking rather for the real thing. For the heart of the matter. For the essence of experience, and the sense of the whole of it. For how we really feel and dream. For the pain and the absurdity, the song and the growl. For the triumph of love.

Poetry is a simple thing, a moving thing, a real thing. And only the real thing is worth doing.

What one wants is life, not Mme. Tussaud's.

Disregard the shiny photography, the clothes on the heroine, the impressive crowd scene, the slow, slow dissolve. The questions to be asked: "Is this alive? Does it know what it is doing? Is anything felt?"



Poetry: to render the world of feeling as if it were acknowledged reality. (No matter how wild or fantastic the feelings.)

Is this not how we live anyway, aware of it or not? How our vision is coloured, and clouded. Our health impaired. Our hearing pitched. All the senses gone special in their tilting.

The poet takes us into his particular tilt.

And if it is a film this can carry us miles away inside it.

We inhabit feelings: desires and dreads: the whole huggermugger scale. And we see everything through felt perceptions: seeing a world as we don't like it, and a world as we'd like it to be, and sometimes a world as it really is.

We must occupy the world that is, to defy and conquer the world we don't like, to create the world we want.

This need be but a lyric, a glimpse of the spring, a little aviary. But wide-awake!

To speak of poetry of film does not mean that one is yearning for High Art. Nor talking about Great Films.

We do not want masterpieces. They have a way of being formidable and unlikeable. "Grand Opera", "Old Masters", "Epic Poems"—these are not contemporary enough for film. No, not masterpieces: but a fresh vision, a key opening a door, something growing.

It is much easier to make Great Art than it is to create a simple complicated truth. It is much easier to be pretentious than to be at ease.

One asks merely for a little magic. If the magician's art turns out to be Great Art, that part of it will not be his concern.



Grant this: that memorable poetry has always been a dramatic ritual. The Coliseum. The church. The theatre. The bullring.

For us, the cinema.

Cinema's influence upon poetry and painting is historical truism. Cubism, imagism, surrealism: attempting to incorporate the movement and the precision and the multiplicity.

* "Mr. Broughton is, in the most affectionate sense of the term, an odd bird. There is, or should be, room for such rarities in the greater aviary of the film world. *Manchester Guardian*

Finnegan's Wake is a storehouse of experimental films. Gertrude Stein's plays are abstract documentaries. Pound's *Cantos* are a literary newsreel. The best script for a film on London is still *The Waste Land*. And we all know about Cocteau.

Poets have to be contemporary. Otherwise they might as well take up taxidermy. And poetry lives now in a movie world. And must move with it. It will—if the movie world will move too, and move over.

Film is the contemporary art. We have all learned to see with cinematic eyes: to look at events in sequence and juxtaposition: because we know this is closer to psychological truth.

Lumière and Freud: fellow-workers. They have given the Absolute a rough time and may have bashed it for good. The single picture is no longer the total picture. The modern mind thinks in associations and relativities of the world's complex merry-go-round and its mixed up truth.

Film is the contemporary art, for it moves in time, as our lives do. It is an unreeling of vision, and its eyes can go everywhere. It does not have to be a total picture at once, like the easel painting. It is a total only after it has been added up.



Unlike a book in your hand, the film keeps on going whether you like it or not, demanding attention for what it has seen. It refuses to stop for coffee in the interval or changing the scenery. For it has an existence of its own. It is a microcosm larger than life. The hypnotizing enormity of that magic screen! And its boundaries are endless.

Poetry opens a door for cinema. Cinema might open its door a bit wider. There is no meaningful art without poetry. And the memorable films—from Vigo, Flaherty, Ford, Chaplin, Clair, or Dreyer—remain those conceived with the sturdiest poetic imagination. But movies are strapped to the stage and the novel. And cinema is not the problem play. Not the popular novel. Not the classic. But the truly cinematic creation.

What an unexplored terrain spreads between the prosy feature drama at the end of the programme and the other stereotypes at the beginning: the violent cartoon, the polite travelogue, the official documentary.

When will be the day for the poets to move in? The area is vast and virginal, but they will probably not be invited to enter. They will have to stake their own claims. And become magicians manipulating the wide-awake dream.

When will the poets themselves be ready to move in?

A poem is a film.

A poem is intended both to be looked at, and to be heard.

It is both image and language, vision and music.

It has movement and form, a progression and a meaning.

And it is to be remembered, and looked at again.

2. MAKING A MOVIE OF IT

Look! Look! And what do you see?

The basis of all poetry is the fresh stare, the intense and participating eye on the ball. Look at the object! What is it? What does it suggest? And where do we go from there?

Reaffirm a first principle: cinema is a visual art. Everything must be seen and imposed upon for the camera.

Listen! And what do you hear?

There is the human voice. There is music. And there are the multitudinous sounds of reality. There are also the sounds in the imagination, and the sounds to be invented technically.

And what of all the noises, the odes and the curses, the grunts and gurgles the human being gives vent to? This is richness of language beyond the well-written, well-spoken.

Pictures to widen drowsy eyes! Sounds to awaken lazy ears! And their rhythmic pas de deux.



The Necessary Elements: Image. Sound. Idea. Feeling.
Their Objectives: The eye. The ear. The mind. The heart.

Method of Attack

1st. There is the passion. Keeping one awake nights, visualizing and revisualising: learning to dream with the eye of a camera. A way of seeing, a way of wanting things seen, and the vision of the whole.

2nd. There are the realities. Action! A way of happening, and a way of making things happen. The things people do. And people doing them. To visualise sound. To listen to movement. The struggle to make reality look more real. The perverse and intractable human being. The weather.

3rd. There is the development. Rushes, footage: the collecting of the fragments. To see how it looks: does it look like what one saw? A footing to walk forward on?

Study and restudy. Shooting it again, or shooting more of it. Hang up the raw material, and keep going.

4th. There is the putting together of the parts. This is the magic chamber. From the separate images the sequence is born. By way of montage the drama is born. And all the way to the end there is the cutting room floor. And what a litter!

Anyone (more or less) can shoot footage, as anyone (more or less) can put down words on a page. But what composes a film is the quality of the individual shots PLUS the way they are put together.

Images and sounds in dynamics: a science of poetic equilibrium.



Montage is the prestidigitation: the card-dealer shuffling his pack, to lay out possible fortunes.

Throw all the shots into the air. See where they will land. See if they will land at all. Are they sure-footed?

Surprise, and the magician. And surprises for the magician himself!

The cutting room: home of style. The editing board: the arbiter of form. (Is your montage your own, and a new thing? Or is it that same old Russian baby followed by a rosebud?)

A matter of timing. All art is a matter of timing, but none more so than this one. Here all time can be altered—paced, replaced, forward and back, vivace or retard.

But every moment must count. Axiom: when in doubt, cut! Most films are two hours too long.

Rhythm. Rhythms. Inner rhythm. Varieties of rhythm. The emotional basis of all music. All ritual. All magic.

And none of this will show when everything is put together.

Instruments of magic. The camera lens. The tripod. The light meter. The parallax. The filter. The focus. The 1,000 watt lamp. The recorder. The viewer. The splicer. The movieola. The synchronizer. The squawker. The optical printer. The reels in the can. Finally, the screen. And the projector.

The magic of light piercing the poem, striking up the dance of unreal realities, enlivening the darkness.

And is the audience there?

3. HOW TO ACT A POEM

Film acts in a time dimension. A film does not stop: its being is to move, to activate, and to add up.

A film is for the actors, not for the script. And the audience is a member of the cast.

Poetry, too, is an action unfolding in time: the responses to the given world sprung into the world made. Knowledge is nil without action.

The poem is every point in the continuity, and it is the point of the continuity. We occupy a duration, we think in durations, and we feel durations. Not fixities. There are no absolutes in feeling, except neurotic feelings.

For life is an action, ever on the move, often on the run. This is not to be captured by the static composition of the portrait photographer. Stunning single shots do not make a film. Very nice if you can get them, but not for their own sake.

What one wants is life, not still life.



Good cinematography should, like the mechanics of good verse, be unnoticeable on its own. Artifice is always to be concealed.

The test of a work of art: it ought to look as though it just happened. One should not know how it was done, nor care too much.

The aim of artifice is to appear artless. This can only be achieved by precision. Nothing soft, nothing vague, nothing wasted. Poetry cannot afford the fuzzy. Beware of soft focuses!

Poetry of film does not mean blur, however lyrical. Lyrical blur in any art is an irritant. It is least palatable in the cinema. The camera's magic lies in its precision.

The most common offence of lyrical blur: movie music. Not to speak of the obvious A-picture fiddle-slush, take a documentary of herring, iron or wheat with a "beautiful" symphonic score pasted on to it: is this not falsity and a dilution? If the sound is not integral to the subject, the ear does not work with the eye, the experience prettifies: the film is less real and not poetry.

Throw wide open someday the whole problem of film music. Just because movies began with mood music on the piano to fill up the silence is no excuse for carrying on the tradition and ignoring the rich potentials of sound track. Accept its challenge!

An alive soundtrack means that the noises and music grow out of the realities filmed. Let us have composed sounds, belonging to the filmic conception, and forget the concert hall!



If film is primarily a visual experience, then its action should grow out of revealing movement. Else it is neither real nor magical.

In the customary dialogue drama, one has little to look at beyond what is being said.

Film direction is nearer choreography than Stanislavsky. For film is a new kind of ballet. The poetry of space: "figures in a landscape". And drama articulated in expressive gesture, significant pantomime, and the everyday tic and tickle.



It is no good hoping that the world will trust its poets before they are dead. It never does. So in the meantime the poets will go on making poetry.

It is a waste of breath to lament the difficulty of making poetry on film. Of course there is no money for it. No time for experimentation. No set-up. But there never has been enough of these things and never will be.

Of course it is difficult. Everything worth doing is difficult. One must make the work anyhow: trust the passion, the way of seeing, and the zest for doing.

Poetry has always been created in spite of. In spite of the world's indifference. In spite of practical objections. In spite of the word No. In spite of.

One must always do the impossible. Art itself is impossible.

Let us just do the best we can. The very best. It will be quite enough. And some of it will be more than that.

For there is no meaningful life without poetry. And nothing is art that lacks it.

DOCUMENTARY: THE SULKY FIRE

The failing impetus of documentary in Britain today was, as noted in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, widely discussed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1951. The straightforward expository film, of course, has reached a high standard of efficiency in Britain, and won many prizes at international festivals; but the essence of documentary inspiration lies deeper than this. The problem continues to occupy both the founders of the original movement and those who would like to inject new life into it today. This feature is the beginning of an inquiry; we hope that more people, from various points of view, will make contributions later. Basil Wright's article, a shortened version of one originally published in *Film Forum*, and reprinted here by kind permission of the editors, summarises a point of view held by many who worked in British documentary in the 30's. The first reply is made by Brian Smith who, as he says, was an "outsider" at that time. Brian Smith has made educational films, worked for the Army Film Unit, and is now in charge of production at Realist Film Unit. He has specialised in films with and about children, and has recently made "Your Children's Sleep" and "Your Children's Play". These are among the most sensitive and individual of recent British documentaries.

SELECTED TEXTS

Then (the 30's)

We believe that the cinema's capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form . . . Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story.

JOHN GRIERSON

Let cinema attempt the dramatisation of the living scene and the living theme. . . . Let cinema recognise the existence of real men and women, real things and real issues, and by so doing offer to State, Industry, Commerce, to public and private organisations of all kinds, a method of communication and propaganda to project not just personal opinions but arguments for a world of common interests.

PAUL ROTH

I am firmly convinced that now is the time to increase the value of the documentary film by using human episodes. More of the spectators' interest would be kept by employing scenes drawn from the real problems of mankind.

JORIS IVENS

BASIL WRIGHT

I DIDN'T SEE anything like all the films shown at Edinburgh, but of those I did see only two seemed to have any of the spark and originality in theme-treatment which used, not so long ago either, to be the distinguishing mark of the documentary film. I feel some sympathy with Alan Dent who, arriving late at the retrospective show, took Flaherty's *Industrial Britain* to be the work of a newly discovered master, and was surprised to learn that it was nearly 20 years old. For *Industrial Britain*, compared with a recent C.O.I. film on glass-blowing, is as a skylark to a corpse.

What is happening is that documentary people are too content to accept the clammy strangulation of contemporary sponsorship. The films show no signs of any fight against the compromise mentality which sees great virtue in an "if" or a "but", but none at all in affirmation. The films go their dreary way, impeccably photographic, neatly edited, skilfully recorded, and inconceivably jejune. The only signs of mental activity seem to come from half-baked left-wingers who seek to insert "propaganda angles" at inappropriate moments and in a half-baked way.

Of the two films which had something exciting and important about them one was in fact French. I mention it because it represents exactly what the British documentary people ought to be doing in this country and about this

CAVALCANTI: The whole emphasis of the cinema must fall upon its subject.

STUART LEGG: The subjects of modern life are collective subjects. The future of movie will lie in interpreting them.

Now (the 50's)

We must get more people who are in key positions in the governments and in the great industries of the world to recognise what a great instrument lies ready to their hands—that documentary is of all mediums, not only the most widely understood, but the most convincing. Seeing is believing. . . . But documentary needs more and more far-seeing support . . .

ROBERT FLAHERTY

No Night Mail these days, no North Sea, no Song of Ceylon, nor Farrebique. . . . There is little adventuring into the achievements of the individual into our society, or into the life of our communities. Public relations films in general lack a sense of event and of constructive forces in the making.

JOHN GRIERSON

country. In *Le Sel de la Terre* Rouquier had the job of making a film about the reclamation of the salt marshes of the Camargue. He has made a film of vigour, imagination, and poetry all compact.

Where is a comparative British documentary to tell us about the great things being achieved in our welfare state? Have we seen anything other than mild little information films about this and that? Where, today, can we find a man like Rouquier to make a film about a new waterworks or a drainage scheme which adds up to something filmically worth while?

The second film was British. Its title: *El Dorado*. Beautifully edited by Terry Trench, and with a superb score by Elisabeth Lutyens, it reveals British Guiana for the first time on any screen—the sugar country, the Savannahs, the Amer-Indian communities, the bauxite mines, and the fabulous forests, waterfalls, and monsters of a still unexpected hinterland pulsating with untapped wealth.

How did *El Dorado* come about? The first significant point is that it was not sponsored. Two film-makers—John Alderson (director) and Reg Hughes (camera)—rustled up enough production funds (through independent film-financing, mark you), and plunged into British Guiana, living rough and shooting like mad all the time. While there, they did in fact pick up a slice of sponsorship from the aluminium people and thus got a second film on the side.

The material they shot was good for these reasons: they had a sense of adventure; they *felt*, rather than merely observed; and they really wanted to put that extraordinary country on the screen.

The second significant point is that the material was purchased by the C.O.I. and the film edited and completed by the Crown Film Unit. Why? One guess might be that the C.O.I. could not dare to allow a rival comparison with the inadequate results of their own West Indian expedition, shown in Edinburgh as *Caribbean*, and a perfect example of using a clever sound-track to cover (partially) a great deal of unsympathetic shooting. If that guess is correct, then C.O.I. has been very clever, for it now gets the credit for a job which could never have happened under its own sponsorship system.

There is a message to British documentary in both these films, and it is this. If documentary is to survive as a living force we must look at what is happening here—in human relations as well as technological achievement—with new and livelier eyes and ideas; we must look outwards to the vast territories of the Colonial empire and accept the responsibilities in which we are nationally involved. Indeed, if we cannot inspire ourselves by a glance at our own country, surely we can find—in Africa and elsewhere—that sense of mission (I use the word advisedly) which has in the past underlain the best documentaries.

We need, therefore, more divine discontent amongst the youngsters; enough at any rate to ensure that the sponsorship bastions are stormed and the self-complacency of the technician put where it belongs.

BRIAN SMITH

IN THE MIDDLE 'THIRTIES I was an outsider. The insiders seemed to know how to coax a djinni out of a bottle. If you asked for the bottle they would pass it, but the djinni would not emerge. I listened to their talks and read their magazines, but still the mystery remained: how did they get their production money, and what influence did its sources have upon the content of their films?

The first part of the question is, I now think, answered adequately by the phrase *ask and it shall be given unto you*. The condition of the givers' consciences may have been influential. As the givers were groups, not individuals, this surmise involves trying to understand what is a group conscience. The second part of the question is simpler. The sources of money restricted the scope of the subject matter, but did not change the direction of the main message. If I had sought to verbalise my understanding of the message, instead of worrying about the preacher's upkeep, I might have failed, but a lot of futile irritation would have been avoided.

About the nature of the original Documentary message, we can still form our opinions from the celluloid, much of which survives unimpaired except by the atrocities of 16 mm. processing. Displayed for our admiration in most of the films are what used to be called working-class people and machines or apparatus. The people are not usually presented as individuals but as fulfillers of functions. Certainly there was sympathy for the fulfiller as well as the function, but, in what would have been called the final analysis, the function mattered most.

Because the original Documentary group included a poet, a scientist, an economist and a reporter, the recurring themes of workers-and-jobs, and people-and-environments, were treated from a variety of attitudes. Some of the films carried

superficial sponsor-messages which fooled no one; almost all were woven from the main themes. If it is still asked what the sponsors got out of all this, I would answer: apart from any easing of conscience or other satisfaction, they gained prestige from association with the concept that this was to be the century of the common man. Most of the sponsors had an obvious role in realising this concept, so the association was apt and—especially when superficial propaganda messages were avoided—convincing.

The main message of Documentary derived from late-Victorian sources. Ideas and hunches, already well absorbed by the well-read, needed to be popularised. To be popularised they did not require to be explained, but demonstrated. The cinema is the best of all demonstrators.

Perhaps in fifteen years Documentary played through and played out its original task. Perhaps conclusion was determined by a change in the givers' consciences, and not merely by a change of givers. This surmise, and its implications, is in line with my reputedly sad, sardonic attitude. I have stated it because what follows—a forecast—might in isolation seem to come from an optimist.

During the years of success, Documentary insulated itself from the impact of the greatest creative thinking of this century: that of Sigmund Freud. This may have been because the impact of Freudian thought upon middle-class individuals was not reassuring, or because the working class was felt to be unready for such shocks. Anyway, it was not until 1943 that *Neuropsychiatry* and *Personnel Selection* were given very restricted distribution. Not long after, poet, scientist, economist and reporter no longer rowed in what was recognisably the same boat, though it was not one of them but one of their successors who said, "When the 'psychs' come in, I go out". Yet by then, psychology had developed from pre-occupation with the individual to consideration of the group, and was being widely used outside the oh-so-funny consulting rooms with their convulsively-comic couches.

If there is to be a new Documentary movement, there must be a new boat. I do not think it will be any more clearly a Freudian boat than was the original one Darwinian or Huxleyan.

The belief most likely to form the foundation of a new Documentary movement is humanism. A humanist is a person who retains his individual conscience and sense of his own responsibility in all circumstances, and whose way of doing things is by co-operation. His antithesis surrenders conscience and sense of responsibility to a leader, and does things by obedience or by command. Documentary will wisely concern itself no more with the political aspects of humanism than it did with the political aspects of socialism. It will try to demonstrate practical co-operation, and will need a degree of insight rarely yet apparent in films, and new techniques galore.

The subject matter is available all around where efforts are made to organise anything from a nationalised industry to a tennis club, and in homes and in schools. What is not readily available is tolerance to recognise and examine the phenomena of human group behaviour. If you can predict the speed with which this tolerance will spread, you can predict the time when the new Documentary movement will be perceptible to outsiders. Expect no sudden spurt; rather, a gradual change from the basic belief of the 'thirties to a different one, which may be the one I have suggested—or may be the damned opposite. (Many of the conclusions in *Hollywood*, *The Dream*

(continued on page 140)

The Seventh Art

The Countess of Dudley, hostess at a Claridges cocktail party last night, produced her plan for brightening up London cinema premieres. "They need gay colours, something different", she said. So 50 hunting folk, headed by the Duke of Beaufort, will wear Hunt evening dress at the first night of Somerset Maugham's *Encore* . . . "Pity they can't bring their horses", said petite, dark-haired Lady Dudley. (Evening Standard.)

★

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LATE GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSE's
ABU-HOSSEIN

(Advt. in Bengal Motion
Picture Association Journal).

★

The much-talked of film *Clochemerle* . . . tells of a small French village which decides to put up a monument of a progressive nature and eventually decides on a public convenience. This is considered rather original but it should be pointed out that the village of Thorpe, near Ashbourne, has done the same thing for its Festival of Britain effort. Unlike Thorpe, which did this without any undue trouble, the effort in the film causes a considerable furore and troops have to be called out. The film is good entertainment of an adult character. (Film Review in a Derbyshire local paper.)

★

Films like M.G.M.'s *Quo Vadis* and the David O. Selznick production of *Gone With The Wind*, or 20th Century-Fox's *David and Bathsheba*, or Paramount's *Samson and Delilah*, and a number of other great pictures I could name, can be properly made in only one medium—motion pictures. (Samuel Goldwyn in *Colliers*.)

★

The Johnston Office passed a film script in which Barbara Stanwyck portrays an immoral character, but eliminated a scene in which she smokes in bed, because it might encourage fire risks. (Daily Mail.)

★

Adele Jergens has more titles than most celebrities. Seen soon in Perlberg-Seaton's *Aaron Slick from Pumpkin Crick*, the redhead has been named Miss Hot Tea, Miss De-Icer, Miss Eye Test and Miss Margin Release by various industries and organisations. (Paramount Pictures hand-out.)

★

To save wear and tear on the vocal cords of the stars, Hollywood pays Ezelle Poulé £50 a day to scream for them. And she is in constant demand. Miss Poulé has screamed for Joan Crawford (in the film *Possessed*), Shelley Winters (in *Fiddlers Green*) and many others. She practises sometimes in the basement of her Hollywood home . . . But generally she drives out into the mountains and looks for a lonely spot "where I can scream my head off in peace". (Evening Standard.)

INTERVIEW WITH HUSTON

Karel Reisz

THE DRIVE AND RUTHLESSNESS of his films and the gory publicity stories (there's a particularly nasty one about a fight with Errol Flynn—but they are probably all apocryphal) had led one to expect a formidable man, tough, probably difficult. The first encounter dispelled these fears at once. A tall, impressive figure, immaculately dressed in a lounge suit, quietly in command of his film—and, one imagines, anything he touches—John Huston turned out to be accessible and rewarding to interview. On the sound stage of Isleworth Studios, during the shooting of *The African Queen*, he was calmly in control, though a little remote from his unit.

Huston is completely frank and direct about the merits and faults of his past films, assessing them with surprising critical detachment. He is a little diffident about discussing technique—"all the trouble one takes over composition and lighting may be pleasing to oneself and one's friends but it's usually lost on the audience"—and says that the visual style of his films usually crystallises of its own accord after the first few days shooting: he makes no conscious, formulated plan but lets the writing and performances determine the pictorial style. In *The Maltese Falcon*—of which he speaks with a particular affection—he was chiefly concerned with capturing the taut, personal tensions of Hammett's novel and therefore used the long, uninterrupted group shots staged in depth which characterise the film. But though he likes to work out the compositions of his images with great care, he is uncertain whether the effort is finally worth while. "I've seen Wyler's *The Heiress* three times and got great 'aesthetic' pleasure from just watching the images, one by one. But how much does the average audience get of this? Not much, I suspect". To the obvious reply, that there is a difference between merely "aesthetic" compositions and ones that are dramatically telling, he responds, frankly from experience: "In theory—yes. In practice—only sometimes. There are shots where the way you put them on the screen makes your point; in others, the actors are really doing all the work and it doesn't really matter how you shoot them". In those cases, the "pretty" images are, to him, a matter of personally satisfying a professional pride rather than an essential of story-telling.

Of the technical experiments he has made, he speaks only in concrete terms—theoretical considerations seem to interest him little. *Key Largo* was very much a tracking shot picture: the action was confined within a small space and the continual camera movements gave a sense of the confined, claustrophobic atmosphere. *The Asphalt Jungle* was quick, sharp, ruthlessly cut for tempo. All this, however, he is only prepared to discuss briefly, without much real interest. He appears to be a director whose conception of a film is in the first place literary and the visual style largely a matter for intelligent improvisation on the floor.

For a director with so marked a consistency of approach to his material, it was surprising to hear Huston discuss his method of working with actors. He says flatly—and refuses to qualify the statement—that he does not direct actors. "The trick is in the writing and casting. If you cast the right people, using only good actors, and adjust the script to suit



John Huston, with Humphrey Bogart, on location in Africa filming "The African Queen"

the actors you've chosen, then it's best to leave them to work out their own gestures and movements. Your job is to explain to them the effect you want, and your skill lies in being able to do that exactly and vividly. Then, if they're good actors, it's best not to interfere in *how* they get your effect across—you'll only throw their natural performance out of gear if you try". What if they don't succeed in putting his point across? "They

usually do". Well then, how about X—I mentioned a minor actor whose performance in one of Huston's films seemed to me inconsistent with the rest of the playing. "Oh, X—he's a very bad actor. Only has two expressions: handsome, and tough". And that seemed to end the discussion as far as he was concerned; there was no suggestion that Huston's responsibility as a director had not ended with his thus assessing the actor in question. But he is quick to point out that this method of treating actors happens to suit him and is not necessarily the right one for other directors.

This technique of handling the cast, though perhaps surprising for a director whose films have always been notable for their fine performances, becomes more understandable when one has seen Huston at work and read one of his scripts. Clearly, his sympathetic, quietly authoritative manner allows him to get loyal and accurate responses to all his demands from his actors and technicians. Where another director may stage-manage his actor's every movement as he works out the progress of his sequence, Huston knows what he wants before he goes on the floor and can then allow his actors some latitude within his conception. He is also obviously the sort of person for whom actors will do anything and perhaps the freedom he allows them is in many cases more illusory than real.

Huston works on the scripts of all his films, writing them in great detail, in a lively, lightly sophisticated literary style. His shooting script for *The African Queen* (adapted from C. S. Forester's novel by John Collier, James Agee and Huston) contains only comparatively elementary camera directions and provides only a rough guide to the formal *decoupage*: what guide there is, he explains, is largely to allow the front office to work out a schedule and is not binding to himself in any way. In the description of characters' behaviour, intonations of speech and so on, the script is minutely detailed, designed to give his actors and his unit the fullest possible insight into the effects he intends to make.

"The African Queen".
Humphrey Bogart,
Katharine Hepburn.





"The Red Badge of Courage".

Audie Murphy as the Youth, Bill Maudlin as the Loud Soldier, John Dierkes as the Tall Soldier.

Huston's scripts are surprisingly faithful to their originals. Once he has chosen a novel for adaptation, he treats it with the greatest respect. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Asphalt Jungle* ("Burnett seems almost to write for me", he says) are among the most faithful adaptations ever filmed. In *The African Queen*, apart from condensing the climax and dramatising the ending by an ingenious plot twist, he has largely retained C. S. Forester's continuity and dialogue.



We Were Strangers, Huston's most considerable film seen in this country so far, is unique in that his expansion of the source material is more drastic and original; one had felt, seeing it, that more of Huston was behind it than behind his larger, more commercial films. I mentioned with surprise that the maker of *We Were Strangers*—a film which, by inference, makes out a case for political violence—should also have been attracted to make a film of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. The ideologies of the two films, if not actually contradictory, seem distinctly alien. Huston did not really recognise this. *We Were Strangers*, he says, was scripted very quickly and the central character of Fenner was not as fully motivated as he would have wished. The point the film makes—that violence under certain circumstances may become a duty and be morally justified—emerges too rigidly. Fenner never rationalises the problem to himself, nowhere expresses doubts about the rightness of his action, and this makes the film's final gesture too simple. This apart, Huston feels that the inconsistency between the two works should not necessarily preclude a director from tackling both subjects. In working with other people's material, the director is primarily an interpretive artist and as such may respond to different materials provided he feels the characterisations of both to be genuine.

Huston's high position among American directors rests, so far, on his ability to apply immense drive and a penetrating analytical skill to popular material. Unlike Zinnemann, whose

material is generally of a more serious nature than the average commercial film, and unlike Milestone, who leads a double life between worthy and meretricious subjects (and accords each appropriate treatment), Huston has tended to work with above-average thrillers (*The Maltese Falcon*, *The Asphalt Jungle*) which he has directed straight, or with action adventure stories (*The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, *We Were Strangers*) in which he could bring the moral issues to the forefront. But the cold, almost cynical detachment which has served him so well in the thrillers, has also limited the validity of the two more ambitious films, particularly *We Were Strangers*.

Whether this detachment—of which Huston's respectful treatment of others' material and his partially negative approach to acting are symptoms—is an indelible part of his temperament as a director, or whether he has simply refused (or failed) to engage his complete creative personality in his films so far, it is difficult to say. *The Red Badge of Courage*—which, strangely, he regards as a completely objective novel—might, but for the circumstances of its production, have provided the answer. Huston's uncompromising treatment had, according to trade reports, produced a film lacking box-office appeal, and M.G.M. have re-edited it into an action picture. The resulting film contains several powerfully realised episodes but is scrappy and inconsistent, and it would be unreasonable to draw any conclusions on Huston's future work from it.

The African Queen may well prove to be a turning point. Essentially a slight, good-natured fairy-tale about a prim, dowdy lady missionary who falls in love with a boat-captain, the script has a gentle, affectionately humorous quality which is new in Huston's work. It may be that with the freedom of working for his own company and with material whose overtones are in some ways more sophisticated and adult than anything he has so far tackled, Huston will now produce the unreservedly complete film which his admirers have been awaiting.

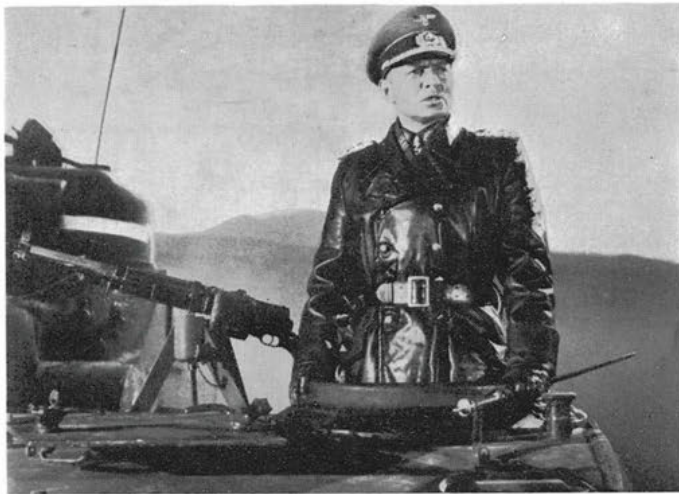


**A
Streetcar
Named
Desire**



Elia Kazan's version of Tennessee Williams' play won a special prize at the Venice Festival, and a prize for Vivien Leigh. These stills show the three main characters: Marlon Brando as Stan, Vivien Leigh as Blanche, Kim Hunter as Stella.





THE SPECTACLE of a myth's burgeoning and growing beneath one's nose is a rare, odd experience. It took centuries to invent Aphrodite, decades to persuade the world that the English were moral, the Russians good linguists, the French gay or the Americans hygienic. Yet within a few short years, and while a ruined Germany is entirely occupied by the forces of

of a naval than a military operation. The fact remains that Rommel seems on many occasions to have behaved with courtesy and humanity towards us; his tactics were dashing, unpredictable, and for long successful. If his two years or so in the desert can be isolated from the rest of his life, and he can be isolated from the rest of his class, then what harm is there in Brigadier Young and Hollywood turning him into a sort of Henty hero?

Unfortunately, however, you cannot isolate him thus; and if you cannot isolate him, then you cannot make a hero out of him without considerable dishonesty. It is here that *Rommel—Desert Fox* becomes pernicious. The German army had a large hand in bringing Hitler to power. He was not an encumbrance that a cruel fate forced upon them, but an asset that for a long time they joyfully exploited. His interventions in strategy were far from being, as this film suggests, invariably disastrous. His decision in the face of all technical advice to hold on to an advanced battle-front during the first cruel winter of the Russian campaign almost certainly saved the German army from utter disaster. He alone seems to have divined that the Normandy invasion would come near Cherbourg, but he let himself be over-ruled by his generals, who had made up their minds that the Pas de Calais was the point of danger. It is nonsense to suggest, as does *Rommel—*

THE GROWTH OF A LEGEND

Second thoughts on *Rommel—Desert Fox*

her late enemies, we have seen the legend grow to strength that the German General Staff was an admirable machine of efficiency, which left to itself would have proved invincible.

Strangest of all, we fought the war in the determination never to allow the German people to evade the reality of defeat, and to ensure that the German army should be left with not one shred of credit. Yet it is we, in the no doubt good-natured person of Brigadier Desmond Young, and the Americans, in the shape of Twentieth Century-Fox, who by the film *Rommel—Desert Fox* have done as much, I suppose, as anyone to frustrate those intentions.

Not that we can criticise either of them for writing of a spectacular enemy commander, or for bringing James Mason on the screen in peaked cap and goggles and calling him Erwin Rommel. Like the ruthless gangster, your dashing general is a natural subject for drama. Even when their contempt for soldiery was still profound, the Chinese continued to enjoy plays that extolled the deeds of great military figures. The bustle and the panoply of war possess an enchantment which it would be foolish to deny, particularly when personified by some daring, resolute leader.

Equally, there is much to be said for preserving a chivalrous respect for your enemy, when he is worthy of it. By all means, if you wish and if you are English, make a hero of him, always providing, of course, he is defeated in the end. There is an admirable tradition to justify Brigadier Young's hero-worship of Rommel; think only of the Whigs and Napoleon, a far less respectable, as he was a far greater, commander than Rommel. It may well be, as Brigadier Young suggests, that Rommel conducted his desert campaign cleanly and honourably. It is hardly disparagement of him to remark that no vast exercise of restraint is required to fight a campaign cleanly in a theatre almost entirely bare of civil population—in circumstances, in short, which approximate more to the conditions

Desert Fox, that men like von Runstedt would have beaten the Anglo-Americans back into the sea but for Hitler's obstinacy, just as it is perversion of history to imply that Rommel lost the battle of El Alamein because Hitler would not send him supplies. Rommel was defeated at El Alamein because he was outwitted, and because the R.A.F. and the Navy had more or less cut his communications with Italy.

As for Rommel in the last phase, let us waste no tears over the incompetent conspirators of July, 1944. We are apt to assume that all Germans opposed to Hitler must automatically have been men of peace who abhorred his dreams of European hegemony. Yet just as the apparently pacific Stresemann worked ceaselessly for the very aims which Hitler was later to attain, so the band of officers and functionaries who sought to kill the Fuehrer in July, 1944, were actuated not by disgust at the ruin he had brought upon the world, but rather by dismay at the failure of his policies. Rommel had been in charge of Hitler's personal bodyguard during the Polish campaign of 1939. So far as we know, he saw nothing wrong in it. He certainly seems to have thoroughly enjoyed the French campaign of the following summer. For long he was the favourite general of the Nazi Party, and a fervent admirer of Hitler.

So much for the politics of *Rommel—Desert Fox*. These must necessarily play an overweening part in any considered reflection upon it, since the film itself hardly remains in the memory as a coherent dramatic work. For all its excitement, the Commando raid at the beginning bears no relation to the rest of the action, while Leo G. Carroll's performance as Runstedt is no more than a brilliant caricature. But the chief defect is Mason's inability to give us any hint of greatness or cunning. We are left in the end with a portrait, as it were, of Mr. Chips, had fortune taken him to Sandhurst.

SIMON HARCOURT-SMITH.

HANDS — OR SOMETHING — ACROSS THE SEA

Marjorie O'Shaughnessy

THE MAN on the next aisle is asleep. If he should begin to snore, an usher will come and tap him gently on the shoulder. It's surprising to see a sleeping customer in this theatre, for it is one of New York's so-called art houses on the East Side of Manhattan, where films are regarded with a certain degree of seriousness. Here are shown French and Italian films with English titles, newly reissued classics of Hollywood comedy, and—above all—British pictures. The American market for British pictures may be described as spotty; this is one of their strongholds.

The house is fairly well filled. No New York cinema is crowded these days except Radio City Music Hall, one of the town's compulsory sights for visitors. Americans, huge numbers of them, have stopped going to the movies. If they have television sets, they are presumed to be looking at television programmes. If they have not, perhaps they are watching hockey matches, or playing bridge or canasta, or helping the children with their homework, or reading news magazines, or counting their fingers and toes. Whatever they may be doing, they are certainly not going to the movies. An unusual Hollywood product like *All About Eve* or *A Place in the Sun* can still entice a portion of the "lost audience" back into the theatres, but most of the time it just stays lost.

For many of its members, houses like the one we are in represent the last outposts of the cinematic art. Here the programme runs approximately two hours, consisting of a single feature, a newsreel, and a short—a cartoon or a documentary. Usually the bill is screened at two, four, six, eight and ten. In the other theatres in residential neighbourhoods like this, two features are the rule. The main feature is shown at seven in the evening, which is too early for most city dwellers, and again at about ten-thirty, which is too late. The operators of these theatres, which belong to the chains owned by the big Hollywood studios, thus make doubly sure that the missing audience is going to remain lost.

Here the eight o'clock showing is about to begin. J. Arthur Rank's semi-nude giant appears and bangs his gong, a burst of Muir Matheson's music wakes up the man on the next aisle, a young couple hurries in exclaiming "Oh, it's just starting", and sits in our row, piling coats between us. The names of the cast are now given, a long, long list with no indication of the roles which the actors portray. All the names are unfamiliar to most of the audience; when the players appear, however, they will be recognized from other British pictures.

The first shot is of the exterior of a house in London, no doubt in Park Lane. Immediately we go inside, where we encounter Cecil Parker in conversation with his butler, Edward Rigby. We know at once that Mr. Parker has something to do with the Government because he is wearing a black homburg, Mr. Rigby has trouble with his feet.

The middle-aged man behind us has trouble with the English accents. "They might as well skip the first fifteen minutes altogether", he says to his wife. "It takes me that long to get used to the way they talk".

"Sh", says his wife. "You remember that man from *Quartet*".

Mr. Parker now leaves for Downing Street or the House of Commons or somewhere. We are on the whole extremely vague about the workings of the British Government, but we are satisfied that Mr. Parker could run the Empire single-handed. Mr. Rigby, having seen him out, goes below to chat with Amy Veness and Kathleen Harrison in the kitchen and presently suggests that they all have a cup of tea.

"Tea"! snorts the man behind us, but he chuckles at the talk in the kitchen, which is pungent and illuminating.

The scene now switches to Mr. Parker in his office, where he is joined by Felix Aylmer. We do not understand whether Mr. Aylmer is his superior, his associate or his underling, and after some inexplicable discussion of the Minister, otherwise unidentified, they disappear from our view.

We now return to the outside of the house in Park Lane, where we find two tall men in trench coats on the doorstep. Even before we see that one of them is Jack Warner, we know that they are from Scotland Yard. Admitted by Mr. Rigby, they ask to see Mr. Parker's wife.

At this, the audience settles down to solid enjoyment. The arrival of the men from Scotland Yard—powerful-looking, quiet-voiced, and above all unarmed—is a signal to any American audience that the picture is now going to start being good.

Mr. Parker's wife emerges on the upper landing. She is Valerie Hobson.

"Do you like her"? asks the girl beside us.

"She's cold", the boy answers. "All Englishwomen are cold".

Mr. Warner and his colleague, Denis O'Dea, are investigating the murder of the Slobodian attaché whose body was found this morning in the Embassy garden. Miss Hobson is no help to them at all. We know that she is concealing something from them about her connection with the attaché. We know that they know it too, but they go away, pretending to be satisfied.

We now join Mr. Parker for lunch at his club. Here the Slobodian affair is being canvassed in a shower of non sequiturs by his friends Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne. Our cup runs over. At each mumbled line, at each fumbled gesture, the audience rocks as at a copy of *Punch* suddenly made comprehensible to Americans for the first time in history.

The men from Scotland Yard take us to a scientific laboratory, where they attempt to cross-examine Ernest Thesiger in a long white coat. He is uncommunicative and while

outwardly civil he is sneering, we feel, at Mr. Warner and Mr. O'Dea. When they leave, he calls in his assistant Raymond Huntley, whose sneers are prompt and forthright. These two will bear watching; they are probably on the Slobodian payroll.

Things now become very involved. Mr. Parker's career (whatever it is) hangs in the balance. What is Miss Hobson's connection with Mr. Huntley? And with Jimmy Hanley, who is engaged in some sort of black market operation in the East End? Miss Hobson is seen from time to time reclining on a divan, cheered by innumerable cups of tea and the philosophy of Miss Harrison. Downstairs, however, Miss Harrison admits to Miss Veness that she is worried. If the Slobodians get the papers missing from Mr. Parker's desk it may mean atomic warfare.

Mr. Parker, his face drawn, comes home with the news that Mr. Thesiger has been found murdered in the laboratory. Mr. Warner and Mr. O'Dea are seen fortifying themselves with cups of tea. Though thwarted at every turn, they appear as imperturbable as ever. Mr. Radford and Mr. Wayne, from the depths of their leather armchairs, continue their inept, inimitable commentary on all developments.

Miss Hobson, after an elliptical telephone conversation with Mr. Huntley, decides to leave Mr. Parker. Miss Harrison cries into her apron and even the misanthropic Miss Veness is moved. Mr. Rigby puts Miss Hobson into a cab and returns to the house, shaking his head and dragging his feet.

In Mr. Parker's office, Mr. Aylmer advises him to see the Minister and offer his resignation. Mr. Parker, head in hands, agrees. The Minister, into whose office we are at last ushered, is Clive Morton. He refuses to accept Mr. Parker's resignation. He still believes in him, though questions are being asked in the House.

"Whatever that means", says the man behind us.

Mr. Parker is heartened by this treatment, but still worried

about where the murderers may strike next.

Who knows? Perhaps Mr. Hanley, bright-eyed and insolent. Perhaps Miss Hobson, drinking cocktails with Mr. Huntley.

Who knows? Why, Mr. Warner and Mr. O'Dea. They have known all the answers all the time. Once again we have allowed ourselves to be bemused by the slow-moving, tea-drinking (and unarmed!) men from Scotland Yard. We should have realised that they were slowly but inexorably closing in on Felix Aylmer, whose suicide note clears up the Slobodian imbroglio.

Little remains to be unwound. Miss Hobson, tearfully welcomed by Miss Harrison and Mr. Rigby, returns to the house in Park Lane. She, too, had suspected Mr. Aylmer but could not speak because of her friends behind the Iron Curtain.

The last shot is of Mr. Radford and Mr. Wayne, capping the denouement with a typical ineptitude as Mr. Matheson's musicians bring the film to a close.

We gather up our coats. "Nobody could drink that much tea", says the man behind us.

"Don't be silly", says his wife. "You loved the picture".

"How did you like it?" asks the girl beside us.

"Fine", answers the boy. "Those English actors kill me. But English women—brrr!"

Outside, blinking in the bright lobby, we examine the posters for next week's film. "Another English picture", a woman near us says.

"I like them", says her companion. "The actors are so natural—and don't you love to hear them talk? Who's in this one that's coming?"

"Let's see", says the first, peering at the cast names. "Jack Warner, John Laurie, Jimmy Hanley, Raymond Huntley, Felix Something—never heard of any of them".

"Oh, I've heard of John Laurie", says the second. "Let's come next week anyhow, shall we?"

(RENÉ CLAIR, *continued from page 110*)

in moderation, and alternates its use with different forms of narration. One would hardly admit that a novel is only a series of conversations; can one admit that a film is only that, and that images play no greater part than illustrations in a book?

The structure of a play, indeed, is conceived differently from a film.

1950. The theatre has to re-compose separate elements of action before forming a synthesis of them. In this adjustment of raw material to purely verbal narrative lies the difficulty of dramatic art, and the eminence of its conventions. In the novel, which can describe a gesture and express a secret emotion as well, it is permissible to *analyse the action* as our memory might do. It is the same for a film. If you remember an episode from your own life, its salient facts will not recur in your memory simply as conversations.

Clair is very much concerned about another important problem—the unequal struggle for a market between the smaller national industries and Hollywood. He believes France should take a lead in establishing a Charter for International Distribution.

1945. It is not easy to define here exactly what an international charter for the cinema would comprise. But if one is prepared to admit that each country should be responsible for ensuring the existence of its own national cinema and, further, that the

exchange of films between nations has a spiritual value more important than the commercial one, it will not be impossible to find a solution to the problems that occupy us.

He also considers that each film-making country should, as a legal obligation, preserve its own films.

One point in Clair's many interesting arguments I would like to question. He regards the cinema and television as ultimately identical because they both at present take the form of sound accompanying a two-dimensional picture on a screen. I must say I think this comparison to be oversimplified. An art is made what it is as much by its audience and the conditions in which it is communicated as by the physical form it takes. Television, I believe, is fundamentally a "live" form of communication going straight to the viewer in the ordinary circumstances of his home; the film is a carefully pre-prepared art-form directed to audiences which have gone out to get their entertainment. That television and the film overlap in some aspects I agree (and big-screen television in the cinemas will show this more in the future), but television will always serve its audiences in a way fundamentally different from the service of the cinema.

Finally, I hope that a publisher in this country will make *Reflexion Faite* available in an English translation, for it is not only an important comment on film history, but a valuable addition to our ideas about the cinema.

Book Reviews

HOLLYWOOD

HOLLYWOOD: THE DREAM FACTORY, by Hortense Powdermaker. (Secker and Warburg, 18s., 342 pp.)

THE DISENCHANTED, by Budd Schulberg (The Bodley Head, 12s. 6d., 396 pp.)

THE DAY OF THE LOCUST, by Nathanael West (Grey Walls Press, 9s. 6d., 207 pp.)

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

Hollywood must be accepted, it seems, as the contemporary hell. Explorers, returning thankfully to civilisation, show their scars and report on its isolation, its cannibalistic natives, their caste systems, fetishes, money worship, primitive beliefs and savage rituals. The latest to brave the Californian jungle is an anthropologist, Dr. Hortense Powdermaker. Her picture of the social system, culture and *mores* amounts to a general indictment: Hollywood is run by the wrong people, on the wrong principles, and the result is likely to be the wrong kind of pictures.

Everyone is insecure, everyone is frustrated; artists despise business men, business men resent and distrust artists; directors dislike writers, writers despise directors; everyone takes it out on the envied but scarcely tolerated actors. Talent counts for less than a combination of luck and knife-in-the-back intrigue; the atmosphere is one of perpetual and unnecessary crisis; money is wasted; ability is wasted; the book of rules, the Production Code, bears no relation to what people really believe. Dr. Powdermaker, who also equates Hollywood's trust in luck with primitive man's in magic, explains the Production Code with some curious South Sea analogies: "Taboos have the same psychological origin as do those of primitive man, fear . . . the forces of censorship seem to most Hollywood people so powerful and unreasoning as to take on the quality of a black magician aiming malevolent spells."

She considers the people in a number of rather irritating little case histories, hiding identities under such coy aliases as Mr. Well Adjusted, Mr. Literary, Miss Manifest Destiny, Miss Frustrated and Mr. Apollo. No one is safe from Dr. Powdermaker: "there are very few writers . . . for whom the satisfaction is not primarily limited to the pay cheque"; under existing conditions "the quality of the movie is much less important than the assertion of the ego of the individual." With attentions divided between personal rivalries, pursuit of profits, asserting the ego and combating black magic, one begins to wonder how any films are made at all.

There is a good deal of truth in all this, of course, and some interesting facts, notably concerning the state of the Unions and the system of contracts. But in a study of this kind the first essential is to define terms of reference. It is not enough to talk about the "content and meaning" of films without indicating what a good film should be; it is too easy to assume that everything one dislikes is the result of "the system," and that films one likes are made in spite of it; comparisons with South Sea customs, Dr. Powdermaker's only yard-stick, are weird and pointless. Dr. Powdermaker stresses her own impartiality and lack of involvement, but too often she seems less objective than merely credulous. There is, for instance, her suggestion that an actor is frustrated because "at the height of climax the camera concentrates on a prop such as a broken chair instead of on him as the director endeavours to get a synthetic emotional effect." In her 300 interviews (frustrated people like to talk) she has clearly heard any amount of gossip and complaint. It does not seem to have occurred to her that in an industry combining the work of so many people, each of whom sees his own job as the most important part of the picture, there is bound to be resentment. In particular, her view of the producer as someone who interferes with the real film-makers suggests a remarkable lack of understanding.

Hollywood, unfortunately, is not an isolated South Sea community; it must be considered with reference to the films it produces and the social system it reflects. In this painstaking and relentlessly humourless picture of gangster morality and totalitarian government, Dr. Powdermaker continually loses sight of the real issues.

To the novelist, Hollywood is a favourite symbol for illusory dreams and shabby realities, a Siberia in a warm climate which saps the endurance and destroys the integrity. Budd Schulberg's *The Disenchanted*, an ambitious, fascinating mixture of fact and fiction, shows it as the last stage in a writer's decline, the exile from which there is no escape. The basis of the novel is a trip made by Schulberg and Scott Fitzgerald to a college weekend which was to provide background material for a musical. The expedition ended in disaster with Fitzgerald, hopelessly drunk, ordered back to New York by an outraged producer. Fitzgerald, thinly disguised as Manley Halliday, is an exacting hero: the writer of immense promise, betrayed by early success (cf. "There are no second acts in American lives") and identified so closely with his period as to seem ten years later (the date is 1939) a scarcely credible survival from it. Schulberg's attitude, expressed through the young writer, Shep, is a curious combination of admiration and disapproval. His theme, stated far too explicitly in one or two highly artificial conversations, is the contrast between the irresponsible 'twenties and the socially conscious 'thirties. But the flashbacks to Halliday's past (" . . . that was a good time, a sweet time, a lost time. The staccato popping of corks had been a rhythmic counterpoint as we danced in a champagne haze on the rooftop of the Crillon, in a champagne daze on the rooftop of the world") suggest chiefly the blurred vision of someone dubiously influenced by extensive but unassimilated reading of Scott Fitzgerald. Schulberg fails with Halliday as a character because of this lack of imaginative insight and his own uneasy division of sympathies. The last chapters, however, written out of a sustained and violent anger at the humiliations Halliday undergoes from the giggling professors and undergraduates, the pompous producer, are impressive. What Halliday symbolises is forgotten and, freed of its limiting thesis, the writing takes on intensity and power.

The villain is the producer, a curiously caricatured figure of the cultural snob; suave, inperceptive, tyrannical—a film man out of a Peter Arno cartoon. Schulberg showed Hollywood in several lights in *What Makes Sammy Run?*, but here he is concerned with it rather as a symbol of the pressures and temptations against which Halliday struggles and which are bound to destroy him. It is ironic that Scott Fitzgerald himself should have written, in the unfinished *The Last Tycoon*, one of the very few Hollywood novels which does not have its foundation in anger or self-pity; Stahr, the benevolent, all-seeing dictator, is a strange counterpart to Schulberg's Victor Milgrim.

Anger is the driving force of Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*. Written in 1939, a year before West's death in a car accident, this novel has had a hearsay reputation as the best book about Hollywood. Certainly it is the most savage; a raw and bitter picture of the hangers-on, the lunatic fringe—the extra with delusions of stardom, the derelict cowboy actor, the young artist escaping from scene painting to a picture of the destruction of Los Angeles, a dwarf bookie, a clown, a cockfighter. But the novel seems to me much over-rated. West is concerned not with character or plot, but with descriptions in which the grotesque is determinedly and sometimes ludicrously sought out and the horror is piled on with hysterical revulsion. At a Hollywood party a dead horse floats upside down in a swimming pool; it is revealed as a model. West's novel has something in common with his horse: calculated to horrify, it achieves a momentary shock effect followed by awareness of the arbitrary and consequently meaningless use of artifice.

Hollywood stands for the ludicrous, the extravagant and the grotesque—*The Day of the Locust*, which might describe any shabby theatrical milieu, takes advantage of these symbolic overtones. To the novelist, Hollywood traditionally signifies the failure of the artist when confronted by the triple threat of ease, money and regimentation, and the great betrayal of the retreat into script writing. Halliday and his many predecessors engage in it only for the money which will free them to continue their real work; that the script might be as rewarding as the novel is scarcely considered. To Dr. Powdermaker, as to the novelists, horror and disillusionment are the primary sensations.

But Hollywood stands also for the American success story in its most self-evident form; the gold rush town, making millionaires out of small town showmen, the land of opportunity at its most opportune, the symbol to the world at large of American faith in the benefits of material prosperity. Studies of Hollywood reflect not only an attack on a notoriously vulnerable target, they echo the misgivings and uncertainty of so much American writing. Hollywood is found guilty in part because the standards of the success story itself are under fire, as they have been ever since Dreiser indicated that the reverse side was the American Tragedy.

TROUPERS

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW. Ethel Waters as told to Charles Samuels. (W. H. Allen, 12/6.)

WE BARRYMORES. Lionel Barrymore as told to Cameron Shipp. (Peter Davies, 12/6.)

Reviewed by Harold Lang

Ethel Waters telling to Charles Samuels sounds exactly like Ethel Waters. "So I did nothing for a whole hour, I wanted that chick to relax and think I wasn't going into action. She was small like all the girl friends he'd two-timed me with. Then I started for her, I gave her one of Ethel's short hard lefts to the chops, then dragged her into that ladies' room. I locked the door, then just beat the living hell out of her".

Lionel Barrymore telling it to Cameron Shipp sounds unhappily like any Clifton Webb New-Yorker. "I was born with the conviction, to which I still adhere, that anything resembling work is a nauseating spectacle". Obviously neither book is without Art, but Ethel Waters sounds as if she did not know how not to reveal herself. Mr. Barrymore wears, or has been fitted with, a wearily familiar mask through which an occasional guilty attempt to be honest cannot help coming out, wryly self-congratulatory. Both disarm by refusing to consider themselves real artists. (She wanted to be maid to a "nice lady who'd take me round the world". He still prefers amateur painting and music.) Yet both hint at enough of their methods to confirm what one had felt, even in these books, to be basic differences.

Barrymore is the confessed imitator; his technique, the reproduction of the observed, can be a very respectable technique when one reproduces from life direct, but the reproduction of other actors' reproductions is a spectacle to which its huge familiarity must not resign us. Ethel Waters is a distinct, original talent; her singing of "Happiness is a thing called Joe" (in Minnelli's *Cabin in the Sky*) belongs completely to her, and none of her imitators can superimpose themselves on the memory. "As a dramatic actress all I've ever done is remember I try to express the suffering—or the joy—I've known in my lifetime. I was telling the things I couldn't frame in words—I was singing the story of my misery and confusion, and I found release in singing". More from feeling than observation she created a new image, and one of these gets to serve a thousand other actors. There are so few original talents. Mr. Barrymore excludes himself for us: "I never considered myself cut out for the family priesthood".

I don't think either book really offers material for hypotheses on what creates an artistic talent. Ethel Waters was conceived by her father holding a knife at her mother's throat and raping her. Her violent and extraordinary experiences and acquaintances, her dope-fiend lover, her terrifying escape from "Georgia Justice", recall Defoe. Mr. Barrymore's upbringing was traditionally theatre-bohemian (but so was his brother's): he tells some nice stories, there are some rueful attempts at humility, but he remains as conventionally defined as his performances. Perhaps what sets Ethel Waters apart, even in this book, is her vivid honesty which, abundantly generous as she is, is clearly more necessary—and even easier—for her than self-flattery. "It's the same thing whether I'm working on Broadway or the Bowery. I just never could learn how to cheat and coast or take things easy. So I go out and always kill myself".

CORRESPONDENCE

His Excellency

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—I hope it won't seem churlish of me, after the many kind things which Freda Bruce Lockhart wrote about me in your last issue, if I take exception to one thing she wrote.

Referring to my latest film *His Excellency* she said, "This was a task, one guesses, for which he had little heart". This seems perhaps liable to be construed as meaning that I entered on the film unwillingly, which is not true, and worked on it perfunctorily to the presumable detriment of its quality, which I hope is not true.

It is for your readers to like the film or not when they see it, but I'd hate anybody to approach it with the idea that I'd tackle anything on which I didn't feel I could work with full enthusiasm and as well as I know.

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT HAMER.

Ealing Studios.

Man of Aran

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—I am surprised to find *SIGHT AND SOUND* resorting to the practice of quoting one short sentence from a considered review of some 700 words. This you have done in relation to my own review of *Man of Aran*.

Doubtless the extract you quoted caused convulsions among your editorial staff, and I am never one to deny the boys their fun in what at times must be, for them, a grim existence.

However, I must ask you in fairness to republish the whole review which appeared in *Cinema Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Summer 1934. I stand by every word of it.

Yours sincerely,

RALPH BOND.

40, Parliament Hill, N.W.8.

Unfortunately we have no space to reprint Mr. Bond's entire review of Man of Aran, though we hope interested readers will refer to the volume in question of Cinema Quarterly. We should point out, however, that not all the reviews in "Flaherty in Review" were quoted in full: the intention was to crystallise certain criticisms of Flaherty's films. Mr. Bond's sentence about the omission of the class struggle on Aran seemed to us to contain his most important point of view on the film, a valuable one that was made by no one else at the time.—EDITOR.

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THE FALCON PRESS



Adrienne Corri
in
THE RIVER

As well as being Jean Renoir's best film for many years (see page 123), *The River* is memorable for introducing a new actress of great promise and personality. Adrienne Corri, nineteen years old, of Scots-Italian parentage, has been seen on the London stage—in Priestley's *Midsummer Day's Dream* and Bridie's *Gog and Magog*, among others: this is her first film. She was once signed for a part in a forgettable British comedy, *The Romantic Age*, but gave up after the first day because she decided she could not play it. The American release of *The River* brought Hollywood offers, but let us hope that someone will find a worthwhile film for her over here.

THE SOUND TRACK

IT IS RARE INDEED that an orchestra on the sound track develops a recognisable style, but the team of musicians comprising the M.G.M. Studio Orchestra have produced a consistently identifiable sound for the past two or three years. An unusual feature is that the conductor seems to have little effect on their performance: Lennie Hayton, Macklin Marrow, Johnny Green, Georgie Stoll and Andre Previn are among their regular conductors but there is no sign that this buoyant group of players are susceptible to any basic change of tone or attack. No doubt they are well served by the studio orchestrators, who provide them with the sort of instrumentation that puts them at their ease, while the recording engineer knows exactly how to deal with their vociferous strings and percussive brass. Nevertheless, considered orchestrally or departmentally, this body of musicians knows what it likes to hear.

An American in Paris by George Gershwin, adapted by S. Chaplin, is taken direct from the sound track on M.G.M. 425-426. It starts with a percussion-strings statement illustrating the traditional assault so characteristic of M.G.M. musicals, leading into the "busy Paris streets" theme, with its brass "car horn" effects. The full tone of the orchestra, however, is withheld until the sudden introduction of the *madiche* tune, in which two files of soldiers in bright blue uniforms enter the scene. They appear on a number of occasions during the ballet, excellently supported by the rounded tone of the brass.

Another aspect of the brass quality is heard on Side 3 when a solo trumpet gives out the "blues" theme, with rather muddy string accompaniment. It is followed by double *forte* passages in which the piccolo and flute are heard to advantage over the rest of the orchestra. Timpani and incisive side-drum sounds dominate the introduction to the *Finale* and the strings in unison are effective in this type of scoring, though they are strictly "Hollywood".

As the climax is reached, the last orchestra chord echoes around the recording theatre before it is cut off by a rim-shot beat on the side drum.

It is a noisy and at times a savage orchestra, but it is possessed of an honest vulgarity, a bounding vitality and a resonant recording style that mark it out amongst a welter of nonentities.

Index of M.G.M. Studio Orchestra Recordings.

1. Slaughter on Tenth Avenue (Rodgers). Ballet music from *Words and Music*. M.G.M.165.
2. The Pirate Ballet (Cole Porter). From *The Pirate*. M.G.M.138.
3. An American in Paris (George Gershwin, adapt. S. Chaplin). From the film of the same name. M.G.M.425-426.
4. Sabre Dance (Khachaturian). Example of orchestral style. M.G.M.119.
5. Prelude and Habanera from "Carmen" (Bizet); Toy Concertino (Raksin). From *Grounds for Marriage*. M.G.M. 367-369.
6. Songs from *If You Feel Like Singing*. M.G.M.345-349.
7. Songs and Dances from *Two Weeks with Love*. M.G.M. 348-350.
8. Songs and Dances from *Wedding Bells*. M.G.M. 370-373.
9. Songs from *Pagan Love Song*. M.G.M. 358-360.
10. Songs from *Three Little Words*. M.G.M. 335-338.
11. Songs from *Showboat*. M.G.M. 407-410.
12. *Teresa Melody* and *Bird of Paradise Melody*. M.G.M. 395.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

(ENCORE, continued from page 114)

TOM: Father leaves you a lovely old place like Chartfield and you give it up for a sordid thing like a prosperous business.

He looks at GEORGE.

GEORGE (stung, begins to move round to his chair): Rather less sordid, I should have thought, than begging and blackmailing. (He moves chair into position).

On this action CUT to REVERSE.

66. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

TWO SHOT. GEORGE still right of screen, but strong foreground. TOM, left of screen, looks at GEORGE and smiles benignly at him.

TOM: Not a bit. All the money I've got out of you has been put to the best possible use.

GEORGE (flopping into chair): Bah!

TOM: The pursuit of happiness.

GEORGE: Will you stop talking nonsense and go now. I've said all I had to say.

TOM: Are you happy, George? Do you get any fun at all out of life?

They both react and turn towards the door as they hear it opened.

67. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of MISS FARROW at door. She checks with a gasp as she sees her employer talking to a window cleaner whom she recognises as his brother. She is about to withdraw, when, off-screen, we hear GEORGE'S first line.

GEORGE (off): All right, Miss Farrow.

68. INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT, INDIVIDUAL, of GEORGE. For once, he is surprisingly cool and unembarrassed by his brother.

GEORGE: Come in. Show Mr. Ramsay (looks towards the door and then, as though thinking things out logically . . .) er, to the window.

He sits down, quite unaware that he has made a witty remark.

FADE OUT.

*38. *Old Member's* dialogue after "Yes" was omitted from the final version; cut straight to Tom's whistle.

†45-47 omitted from the final version.

(BRIAN SMITH, continued from page 129)

Factory apply in England, and not solely to feature production.)

So, I am not quite so angered and depressed by the present situation as John Grierson and Basil Wright, though weary of the sound of shattered hopes. Grierson has claimed that no recent sponsored film compares with *Housing Problems*. What does compare with it is *Chance of a Lifetime* which, despite inadequate technique, demonstrates contemporary problems of human relations boldly and truthfully. It was unsponsored, which may seem to reinforce Basil Wright's argument. But what has happened to its production unit? There is not much use in storming citadels unless you can at least hold on to what you gain.

This problem, which I see as one of tolerance, affects also the artistic aspect of our present difficulties. The original Documentary movement did not seem to me clear-minded about the role of the artist in a group art. To this day, film critics seem to me to write as though cinema were one of the fine arts, which for all the strivings of a Flaherty it can never be. In dealing with human relations subjects you have to try to clear this problem, because it is, indirectly, part of the content of your films. You have to try to practise what you demonstrate, not for any moral reason, but because you can't otherwise succeed.

Thus my optimism does not extend to within sight of triumph. I can quote no triumphs from modern Documentary, and am with Grierson in his dislike of smugness. It seems to me that a sadly high proportion of current production probably fulfils little purpose other than the provision of employment, and doesn't even do that with the principle of full employment at heart.

Lilian Braithwaite, and many more. *The Magic Box* performs a similar service for our British cinema. The supporting parts are played by no less than sixty stars of screen and stage, and the surprising thing is that so many talents and personalities do not distract to any disturbing extent from the story itself. The players fall into place with an admirable discipline, and the story is not in any case of a kind to hold one at full tension, so that it is possible to gain a legitimate additional pleasure from the expectation, identification and appreciation of each performer. Some are unmistakably themselves; others (such as Sir Laurence Olivier playing a suspicious and dumbfounded policeman) disappear almost completely into their parts.

Robert Donat himself falls somewhere between the two extremes. He plays Friese Greene brilliantly, but never quite becomes him to the point of complete illusion. He is excellently matched by Maria Schell and Margaret Johnston as Friese Greene's two wives, and if the former appears to shine more radiantly it is mainly because she has the gayer and more rewarding part. The scene in which Margaret Johnston presents Edith's final breakdown is one of the few really moving scenes in the film.

The period reconstructions, and especially the changes of period within a comparatively narrow range of fifty years, are brilliantly done, and although the Technicolor varies, the colour in some scenes is superb. William Alwyn's background music comes into the foreground in a masterly pastiche of a Sullivan oratorio, which Muir Matheson, playing Sir Arthur Sullivan to the life, conducts.

There are, indeed, a dozen reasons why everyone should see this film, for its restraint, its fidelity, its acting, its colourful period reconstructions, its humour, and for its human picture of a type of individual to whom we all unknowingly owe much: the obscure, unrecognised, patient, dogged, ever-hopeful dabbler in inventions, who is prepared to sacrifice everything to his ruling passion, and who may, out of a hundred different patents, change the history of the world, or produce nothing at all.

MAKING A FILM

The Story of *Secret People*

Lindsay Anderson

*With the Script of Thorold
Dickinson's Film*

To compile this unique record, the author was given full access to every stage of the making of *Secret People*. The result is the full story of a film, told with a completeness and a lively frankness—an emphasis on personalities as well as techniques—that set it quite apart from the general literature on film appreciation. Besides a day-to-day diary of production and shooting, the book includes the full shooting-script of the film, illustrations and frame-stills and a number of appendices.

*Film Academy Recommendation
Profusely illustrated, about 16s. net*

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FILM QUIZ ANSWERS

1. (a) Kazan. (b) Pudovkin. (c) Stroheim. (d) Renoir. (e) Griffith.
2. (a) Dark Victory. (b) Bride came C.O.D. (c) Dangerous. (d) Bordertown. (e) Juarez. (f) Thank Your Lucky Stars. (g) Deception. (h) Mr. Skeffington.
3. (a) Angel on my Shoulder. (b) All that Money can Buy. (c) Faust. (d) Heaven can Wait. (e) La Beauté du Diable. (f) Les Visiteurs du Soir.
4. (a) Scarlet Street/La Chienne. (b) The Long Night/Le Jour se Lève. (c) Riding High/Broadway Bill. (d) Algiers/Pépé le Moko. (e) The Thirteenth Letter/Le Corbeau. (f) The Lodger/The Lodger.
5. All filmed a play by Shakespeare.
6. (a) Aaron Copland: The Heiress, Of Mice and Men, The City. (b) Walton: Henry V. Hamlet, First of the Few, Major Barbara, etc. (c) Auric: Hue and Cry, Caesar and Cleopatra, l'Eternel Retour, Orphée, Lavender Hill Mob, etc. (d) Kurt Weill: Dreigroschenoper, You and Me, One Touch of Venus.
7. (a) Tom, Dick and Harry. (b) Joan of Arc. (c) Johnny Belinda.
8. (a) Pabst in U.S.A. (b) Clair in Britain. (c) Sjostrom in Britain. (d) Robert Wiene in France. (e) Murnau in U.S.A. (f) Lang in U.S.A.
9. Balcon produced *Man who Knew too Much*: Cukor associate producer on *All Quiet*: Toland photographed *The Outlaw*: Wilder scripted *Emil and Detectives*: Coward appeared in *Hearts of the World*: Crichton edited *Elephant Boy*: Orson Welles supplied original idea for *Verdoux*: Pommer produced *Blue Angel*.
10. (a) I, Claudius. (b) Air Pur. (c) Partie de Campagne. (d) Bezhin Meadow, Que Viva Mexico. (e) Queen Kelly, Walking Down Broadway. (f) That Lady in Ermine.
11. (a) Zéro de Conduite. (b) A Song to Remember. (c) Orphée. (d) Beyond the Forest. (e) Grapes of Wrath.
12. (a) Aldous Huxley. (b) William Faulkner. (c) Colette. (d) Christopher Isherwood. (e) Joyce Cary. (f) Hugh Walpole. (g) John O'Hara.
13. 9 years. Farmer Takes a Wife, in 1941.
14. (a) Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde. (b) The Heiress. (c) St. Martins Lane. (d) Scarlet Empress, No Highway, Angel.
15. (a) Mr. Midshipman Easy. (b) O'er Hill and Dale. (c) Tree Grows in Brooklyn. (d) Paris qui Dort. (e) Strike. (f) Nanook.
16. (a) Toland. (b) Maté. (c) Perinal. (d) Tisse. (e) Wong Howe.
17. All incorrect. (a) Der Letzte Mann—The Last Man. (b) Old and New. (c) Cabinet of Wax Figures—Das Wachsfigurenkabinett.
18. (a), (b), (c), (e), (f), (h); yes. (d), (g): no.
19. Longest as released, *Gone with the Wind*. Originally longest, *Greed*.
20. (a) Spellbound. (b) Lifeboat. (c) Lady Vanishes. (d) Strangers on a Train.
21. Coalface.
22. (a) Thorold Dickinson. (b) Ford. (c) Pudovkin. (d) Reed and Kanin. (e) Wyler. (f) Huston. (g) Hitchcock.
23. (a) Claude Dauphin. (b) Kay Francis. (c) Irene Dunne. (d) Phillips Holmes.
24. (a) Production designer, U.S.A. (b) Paramount special effects. (c) Director. (d) Musical director. (e) Paramount dress designer. (f) Scenarist. (g) Art director, R.K.O. (h) Star, Howard Hughes discovered. (i) Maker of "novelties" for M.G.M.

"FILMS AND CHILDREN"

The *Kinematograph Weekly* reviewed the new British Film Institute pamphlet, *Films and Children*, in terms which drew a letter of protest from Stanley Reed, its editor. The *Kinematograph Weekly* acknowledged the letter, and answered certain points, but we print here the whole controversy in full.

Kinematograph Weekly.
November 29th, 1951.

LONG SHOTS

"A pity that the British Film Institute's latest publication, *Films and Children*, should be out of step with the industry's own censorship system. The British Board of Film Censors gives a film an 'A' certificate as a warning to parents that the film is best suited for adult entertainment: and no child under 16 can be unaccompanied by an adult at an 'A' show.

"The B.F.I. publication, however, has different views. It quotes lists of 'Children's Films' which can be hired and shown to child audiences. In a list of 'films which should be enjoyed by children over seven' it includes at least two which have 'A' certificates—*Bad Men of Missouri* and *Rogues' Gallery*. Some of the titles, irrespective of B.B.F.C. certificates, hardly seem happy choices for those of tender years—*Fraternally Yours*, *First Love*, *Home Sweet Homicide*, *Devil's Price* and *Yellow Rose of Texas*. Better choice is the one of the few, *Once Upon a Time*.

"A very odd guide. . . . The Circuits Management Association has more care over the type of films selected for club membership".

"THE STROLLER".

To the Editor,
Kinematograph Weekly.
November 30th, 1951.

Sir,—May we correct errors of fact in your editorial comment on our booklet, *Films and Children*. You criticise our inclusion of two films, *Rogues' Gallery* and *Bad Men of Missouri*, in a list of films for children on the ground that these are "A" films. They are not. Both films have "U" certificates. *Rogues' Gallery*, correctly listed by us as obtainable on 16 mm. from Wigmore Films, is a Columbia Western: you have confused this film with a recently re-issued Pathe crime-drama with an almost identical title, but not obtainable from the source we quote. As for *Bad Men of Missouri*, your own review (February, 1942) of this admirable film correctly credits it with a "U" certificate and describes it as "Capital Western fare for the masses, family and youngsters".

The other films you quote seem to have been selected for their lurid titles. But a title, alas, is not always the best guide to the content of a film. *Home Sweet Homicide*, for example, your reviewer (August, 1946) described as a "jolly" film "about the amazing adventures of four youngsters . . . of the family and for the family". Of the remaining films you name, two are Westerns (recommended by *Kine Weekly* for family audiences), one is a Deanna Durbin musical, and one a Laurel and Hardy comedy. All have "U" certificates.

Even had your charges been rooted in fact we should still have contested your argument, which seems to reveal a curious misunderstanding of the purpose of the "A" certificate. We interpret the "A" as an indication to parents that the film contains shots or sequences which may disturb, alarm or be otherwise harmful to some children. It is not to be assumed that every "A" film is unsuitable for every child, or every audience of children, under the age of sixteen. There are surely many films which may well be shown to an audience of twelve-year-olds, or even eight-year-olds, to which the Censor would hesitate to give a "U" certificate?

All this apart, is it not regrettable that your only comment on a booklet which devotes sixty pages to persuading teachers and other traditional critics of the film industry to take a more progressive and tolerant attitude towards the popular cinema in which their pupils take such delight, is to select a handful of films from an appendix for ill-founded attack.

We point out that your comments must be considered as damaging to the reputation of the British Film Institute and prejudicial to the sales of our booklet. We therefore request that you print this letter in

full, in a position of equal prominence with that of your original comment.

Yours faithfully,

STANLEY REED,
Film Appreciation Officer.

Kinematograph Weekly.
December 6th, 1951.

LONG SHOTS

Stanley Reed, the film appreciation officer of the British Film Institute, points out that my comment last week that a B.F.I. publication had recommended two "A" certificate films for young children is not accurate. The Kine files show two films called *Rogues' Gallery*, both with "A" certificates; but the *Rogues' Gallery* of the B.F.I. recommendation is a Columbia picture, with a "U" certificate, available on 16 mm. through Wigmore Films. The second title, *Bad Men of Missouri*, is not an "A" picture, as an inaccurate entry in our files stated. My apologies.

Mr. Reed comments in his letter to me: "There are surely many films which may well be shown to an audience of 12-year-olds, or even eight-year-olds, to which the Censor would hesitate to give a 'U' certificate"?

As we pointed out last week, we would hesitate to use the age limit of seven as suitable for some of the "U" films recommended, especially as there are two other lists covering "Family Films" and films for "Adults and Adolescents".

"THE STROLLER".

JEAN VIGO

An Index Compiled by

Joseph and Harry Feldman

with articles by

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Illustrated 2/6

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